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Towns and Watson

1897

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THE SON OF A PEASANT



THE SON OF A PEASANT

BY

EDWARD McNULTY

AUTHOR OF "MISTHER O'RYAN."

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THE SON OF A PEASANT

CHAPTER I

CONSTABLE KERRIGAN MAKES AN ARREST

CONSTABLE KERRIGAN, having been transferred to the town of Ballinabog, found few opportunities to rise in the Force. From his point of view, the people were criminally law-abiding. On the first market-day, anticipating some active work, he patrolled the main street. Cattle-drovers, irritatingly sober, shouted after their clumsy animals. Pig-drivers kept their charges so well in hand that the footways were not invaded by a solitary boneen. The country folk arranged their vehicles with regularity either side of the street. If Constable Kerrigan ordered a man to shunt his cart, he was obeyed with geniality; some even went so far as to bid him "Good luck!" When he saw the rows of rough carts with a clean, broad space between, for the animals making towards the market, he felt that for a man anxious to rise in the Force he had been transferred to the wrong district. On the footways, though groups stood thick, they never failed to make way for him. When he shouted, "Are yiz goin' to block up the path all day?" they replied,

"Shure you kin pass an' welkim ! There's room enough for all ! Iv coorse you kin pass, sur. Biddy, stan' ow a the sarjint's way. God bless you, an' good luck t'you, sur !" It was like a conspiracy to deprive him of any chance to rise in the Force.

Even the public-houses seemed in the plot. Though fraternal circles blocked the doorways, though men and girls sipped from tumblers in the light of day, there was not one person on whom he could lay a hand, saying, "Come wid me !"

In his former station he had attended Sunday athletic carnivals, when the hurlers sometimes settled a technical dispute by a sudden appeal to brute force ; he had fought his way through a railway station filled with a wild mob from a racecourse, who smashed the windows of the carriages. Compared with such experiences, market-day at Ballinabog was sylvan peace.

His fellow-constables viewed matters complacently. They even gossiped with the people. But they were contented men.

Constable Kerrigan went to dinner at the barracks with a strong appetite. After this meal he came forth, anticipating that at about nightfall strong drink would begin to assert itself against the interests of law and order. He stood on the path close to the shop of Patrick Flanagan, purveyor and general merchant, licensed to sell tobacco, beer, and spirits, to be consumed on the premises. While Mr. Flanagan carved bacon or dispensed tea, a temporary young lady assistant at the opposite counter attended for petticoats, ribbons, toys, delft goods, and ironmongery. At the end of the shop Mrs. Flanagan herself tried on boots and shoes. There had been an unflagging clatter of holiday brogues. Constable Kerrigan marked the

careful housewife with her basket full ; the bargaining jobbers helping the higgling with a glass ; the triumphant sellers treating themselves and any one who pleased. He fixed critical eyes—being a bachelor—on girls who simpered, trying the latest hats before a mirror. But apart from his desire to arrest somebody as soon as possible, he was most interested in a girl with a scarlet feather in her hat. She was soon lost to sight near the thronged market. Evening came at last. The drinkers became more demonstrative. Constable Kerrigan grew hopeful. He pushed on to the market square, where bewildered cattle were flanked with hundreds of pigs on whose backs the buyers rapidly scrawled their initials with the sharp end of a scissors. The crowds blocked about the booths. As he turned back he saw the girl with the red feather. He stood in the middle of the street, his eyes on her unconscious face. An old peasant wildly struggling with a pig rushed headlong into him. In a moment he had the affrighted old man by the collar.

"What d'you mane," he shouted, "be dhrivin' through the town like that ? Come wid me, now. Come, now. I've got you. I'll tache you to behave yirsilf !"

Placing a trembling hand on the constable's arm, the old peasant raised a terrified face.

"Indade, sur," he exclaimed, "it wasn't any fault iv mine !"

Constable Kerrigan gave him a shake which lifted the little old man off his feet.

"Don't stand there talking to me !" he roared. "Come wid me now, an' don't resist arrist, or it'll be worse for you. Stan' back, there !"

A crowd began to gather.

"Stan' back, there," repeated Constable Kerrigan,

"or I'll have half a dozen iv yiz in the station. Out iv me way now!"

The people stumbled against one another as he pushed on with his prize. Near the station the old peasant mustered up courage to look his captor in the face.

"Yir not goin' to take me, sur?" said he. "I've nivir bin in prison in me life. I'm Pether Maguire iv the Bog, a dacent man. You won't take me, sur?"

Constable Kerrigan stopped a moment to give his captive a blow on the side of the head.

"Resistin' arrist, are you?" he shouted. "D'you want any more iv thim?"

He drew back his hand as if to repeat the blow, but contented himself with a shake which drove the old man's chin against his knees. When they disappeared into the police station, the crowd hurried after to gape over one another's shoulders from the doorway.

CHAPTER II

SHADOWED

THERE was a lull in the crush of customers. Mr. Flanagan, having drawn his shirt-sleeves across his brows, folded his arms on the counter. A countrywoman just served with Indian meal was tying up her bag.

"It's yirself's makin' the money, anyhow," said she.

"Money, ma'am?" he observed. "That's hard work nowadays. Not like ould times. All the money's lavin' the country. Goin' to America wid the young people."

The countrywoman gave the cord a final twist.

"Go on wid you," said she. "Shure it's said yir the richest man in Ballinabog."

Mr. Flanagan gave a laugh which shook the scales on the counter.

"If I am," said he, "it's a bad lukout for Ballinabog. Don't belave all you hear, ma'am."

From an old greasy purse she slowly counted the price of the meal, biting the silver.

"An' how's yir good woman, sur? But shure I naden't ask. There she is, lookin' fine an' hearty, God bless her! Here's the money, sur."

He proceeded to count the money which she thrust towards him.

"That's always the same," he replied; "always as busy as a bee. Yir change, ma'am."

"An' is this yir little boy?" she observed, turning as she placed her change in the purse. "Troth, yir a fine little man!"

Reaching over the counter Mr. Flanagan seized his son Patsy, lifting him on to the counter where he held him at arm's length.

"There he is!" he exclaimed, admiringly. "As bold as brass. A good-for-nothin', idle young vagabond."

The countrywoman stroked Patsy's curly head.

"Come now," said she, "it's proud you are iv him; an' well you may be, for it's a pictur he looks wid his rosy cheeks!"

Mr. Flanagan gave the bewildered Patsy an affectionate shake.

"Shure he thinks iv nothin'," said he, "but runnin' about the fields wid an ould half-starved tarrier afther rats. He doesn't know his A B C yet, ma'am."

"Yis, I do!" exclaimed Patsy, indignantly. "I'm in second book, so I am."

"God bless you!" said the old woman. "Av coorse y' are, darlint, in second book."

"Wurruds iv two syllables," explained Patsy, eyeing his father.

Mr. Flanagan set him down on the floor.

"Ah, go down ow a that," said he. "Shure yir a disgrace to the family. Hould out yir hand. Here's a pinny for you. Don't let yir mother see it, now. Off wid you!"

As Patsy ran away the countrywoman exclaimed,

"Bedad, he's a credit to you. He's a darlint boy, anyhow. Good-day, an' God bless you, sur!"

Mr. Flanagan was busy again when Patsy came running back. He pushed his way behind the counter, where he pulled his father's coat-tails.

"Daddy," he whispered, "ould Pether Maguire's bin tuk."

"What—what's that?" said Mr. Flanagan. "Ould Pether Maguire?"

Patsy nodded.

Mr. Flanagan stared stupidly at the boy.

"Was—was he dhrunk?" he asked.

Patsy shook his head.

"That's bad news," observed his father, thoughtfully. "Run upstairs, Patsy, at wanst, an' tell Mither Clarence. Away wid you!"

Patsy disappeared. Having wiped his face with a large red handkerchief, Mr. Flanagan went to the door. Cattle passed on their way out of the town, followed by pressed ranks of pigs, with shrieking boys on their flanks. The country people slowly drove their carts. Blocking the narrow doorway with his strong figure, Mr. Flanagan gazed anxiously up and down. Presently his wife exclaimed:

"It's well for thim that have nothin' to do!"

He turned to look inquiringly at her.

"But to stand in the doore——" continued Mrs. Flanagan.

Turning, Mr. Flanagan paced slowly into the shop.

"In shirt-slaves!" exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan.

Mr. Flanagan went behind the counter to fix matters straight.

"And everything," observed his wife, "topsy-turvy,

at sixes and sivins, afther the ruck that was here from morn to night !”

Without rejoinder Mr. Flanagan flung a side of bacon under the counter. When the last customer had gone Patsy hurriedly arrived.

“He’s comin’, daddy !” he breathlessly exclaimed.

Taking his coat from a peg between a smoked ham and a string of onions, Mr. Flanagan put it on as Clarence Maguire, the schoolmaster, limped into the shop. Stooping down, Mr. Flanagan, after a bewildering search among flour-sacks, potatoes, and turnips, drew forth his hat, which he slowly fixed on his head. Clarence, with lips apart, gazed speechlessly at him.

“I’m goin’ wid you, Misther Clarence,” observed Mr. Flanagan. “Don’t be frightened, avic. It’ll be all right.”

As they were passing out, Mrs. Flanagan exclaimed, “Where are you goin’ to ?”

At the door Mr. Flanagan looked round.

“For no harrum, Margit,” said he. “An’ wid the help iv God, I’ll be back in a minit. Come, Misther Clarence.”

As Mrs. Flanagan turned for an explanation to Patsy—who was feverishly anxious to give it—Mr. Flanagan went into the street, the young schoolmaster limping behind. The thoroughfare was still sufficiently blocked to impede them. Mr. Flanagan having walked steadily a few paces, turned to find Clarence flattening himself against a wall to avoid a frightened bullock.

“Shure there’s no hurry at all,” observed Mr. Flanagan, when the danger was over. “I’ll kape beside you now.”

“What can have happened ?” said Clarence. “My grandfather must have taken a glass too much.”

"Patsy says there wasn't the sign iv dhrink on the ould man. But here's the station, anyhow. We'll cross over and find out all about it."

Taking his friend's arm, Clarence was steered through a crowd of carts.

"Why, dhin," said Mr. Flanagan, as they reached the opposite side, "if there isn't the constible himself that tuk him. Good evenin', sergeant!"

Standing in the doorway of the police station, his thumbs in his belt, Constable Kerrigan gazed at the friends as if their presence constituted a breach of the peace.

"An' what d'yiz want here?" he asked, after a moment's silence.

Mr. Flanagan looked apologetically at Clarence; then, thrusting his fingers under his hat, scratched the bald spot of his head.

"Shure dhin, not to bate about the bush," he explained, "there's a rumir that this young man's grand-father's bin tuk, and we just called round to inquire."

Drawing himself up, Constable Kerrigan waved a hand towards Clarence.

"An' who may this young man be?" he asked.

Clarence's pale face flushed.

"I am a teacher in the National Schools," he replied.

Constable Kerrigan again surveyed him from head to foot.

"An' d'you mane to tell me," said he, "that a man iv some education—as I suppose you must be—that you come here to interfare wid me in the discharge iv me jooty?"

"I have no such intention."

"Shure, God bless you," said Mr. Flanagan, "he's the quietest young man in Ballinabog."

Constable Kerrigan, turning to Mr. Flanagan, eyed him sternly.

"You," said he; "aren't you ashamed iv yirself to come here to thry to interfere wid the coorse iv the law? D'you think you can come here," he continued, raising his voice, "to intimidate me to me face? D'you mane--the two iv yiz--to interfere wid the lagal discharge iv me jooty? D'yiz want to get yirselves into throuble? Is that what yiz want?"

"Ah, shure, now—" began Mr. Flanagan, pacifically.

"Is that what yiz are afther?" repeated Constable Kerrigan, more emphatically. "D'yiz mane to foorce yir way in here--the two iv yiz--to defy the law?"

"Shure constable, jule—" said Mr. Flanagan, growing alarmed.

"I must see my grandfather," said Clarence, firmly. "I insist on my right to enter and hear what charge you have given."

With amazed contempt Constable Kerrigan looked down at the pale, lame youth. "You insist?" said he. "You? Do you want to be put out iv yir situation? Is that what you want? Do you know what yir doin' at all? You insist? Who are you or what are you to insist on interfarin' wid me in the discharge iv me jooty?"

"Misther Clarence!" exclaimed Mr. Flanagan, in alarm.

Clarence had pressed forward until he knocked against the constable, whose face grew red.

"I have a right to enter here," said Clarence, excitedly. "Every citizen has a legal right to enter."

"There's the sergeant!" cried Mr. Flanagan, standing on tiptoe to gaze over Kerrigan's shoulder. "Now

we'll have his ipinion. He's a dacent man and a frind iv mine."

But Constable Kerrigan, stepping aside, allowed the schoolmaster to enter. Mr. Flanagan, seeing Clarence at the end of the passage, considered for a moment whether he should follow; but, doubtful of the nature of the calamity which seemed to lurk in Constable Kerrigan's watchful stare, he thought it wiser to depart. He faced homewards with the uneasy consciousness that the constable paced slowly after him as if to keep him under observation.

To be shadowed in his native town unpleasantly reminded Mr. Flanagan of his boyhood when he stole apples from the farmer's orchards. About half-way down the street he stopped. Constable Kerrigan, without quickening his step, arrived beside him.

"Are you follyin' me?" asked Mr. Flanagan, with dignity. "Bekase if you are," he added, as the constable stared at him without reply, "I'd be glad to know the why an' wherefore? I've bin man an' boy in the town iv Ballinabog, an' I want to know, fair an' square, what you mane?"

"I won't tell you what I mane or what I don't mane," replied the constable; "an' I don't care if you wor man an' boy in Ballinabog for a hundhred year. I know me jooty, an' I hope you know yours as well."

"Thanks be to God, I do!"

"Very well, then," said Constable Kerrigan, "do you do your jooty an' let me do mine."

"I'm not interferin' wid you."

Constable Kerrigan gripped himself by the belt. "Well, now," said he, "whether yir interferin' or whether y'aren't, I know me jooty, an' I mane to do it.

If you've anything to say agin that you know where to go to."

"I'll thank you," observed Mr. Flanagan, "to lave a dacent man alone ; for, I tell you"—he raised his voice—"I won't be follyed in me native town be you or any other constible widout a good an' sufficient raisin. Mind that, me man. I know where I am, an' I know who I am, an' I warn you not to overstep yir jooty, or it'll be wurruse for you !"

"I'll folly you," returned Constable Kerrigan, with decision, "whin I please an' where I please. You'd bettther mind yirsilf. I have me eye on you."

"You can have two eyes on me, an' much good it'll do you," said Mr. Flanagan.

He walked on a few paces, then abruptly turned down Chapel Lane, where over the first door was the address : "Joseph Gilligan, Tailor."

Mr. Gilligan himself, in his shirt-sleeves, was leaning easily at the window, his arms folded on the lowered sash. He was smoking, enjoying the calm of the evening after the turmoil of the day. His house being the first from the main street, he had a view of the thoroughfare almost as far as the police station, and had been watching Mr. Flanagan and the policeman for some time.

"Can I come in for a momint, Misther Gilligan ?" asked Mr. Flanagan, approaching the window.

"Iv coorse. Sartinly. Why not ? An' welcome !"

With these courteous expressions, Mr. Gilligan, drawing in his body a little, leaned over to unlatch the front door. Mr. Flanagan entered, closing the door behind him, at the same time observing—

"By yir lave, frind Gilligan."

"An' why not?" returned Mr. Gilligan, too polite to express the surprise he looked.

Taking off his hat, Mr. Flanagan drew his arm across his hot brows. Mr. Gilligan invited him to a seat.

"I won't be sated, Joseph," observed Mr. Flanagan, "as I'm wanted up at the shop. But I've bin shadda'd."

"Why?" asked Mr. Gilligan. "What have you done?"

Mr. Flanagan glanced uneasily through the window towards Constable Kerrigan, who, with his back turned, remained at the corner of the lane.

"That's just what I want to know mesilf," he replied. "I can't call to mind any illagal act or part I've done or tuk. I've bin in this town from the time I was a babby, an' a polisman never shadda'd me except through frindliness."

Mr. Gilligan laid a hand on his friend's shoulder. "Misther Flanagan," said he, impressively, "I've known you from the time you wor a babby. I knew yir father. There's no man I rispect more nor yirself. Is that enough for you?"

Mr. Flanagan grasped his friend's hand.

"That'll do me, Joseph. You know me."

"I do know you," assented Mr. Gilligan, firmly.

The solemnity of these statements caused several moments' silence, during which Mr. Flanagan looked at the fashion-plates on the walls.

"I'll tell you how it was, Joseph," he remarked, turning. "Ould Pether Maguire iv the Bog was tuk. An' the schoolmaster, you know——"

He paused to look at his friend, who, with his left arm across his chest, held his chin with his right hand. Mr. Gilligan nodded.

"Very well. There y'are!" observed Mr. Flanagan, slapping himself on the thigh. "An' see that now. Misther Clarence, a dacent, quiet young man that wouldn't say boo to a goose, as you know——"

Cautiously rubbing his chin as he watched his friend, Mr. Gilligan nodded again. Mr. Flanagan winked gratefully.

"Very well, then, Jo. There we are. The ould man's tuk. Misther Clarence doesn't know whether he's on his head or his heels, an' the pint is—what's to be done?"

Resting his foot on the platform, where he sat when working, Mr. Gilligan nursed his chin a while. His friend anxiously watched him. Presently Mr. Gilligan, without change of attitude, turned his head.

"Is ould Pether Maguire," he asked, "a tinant iv Sur Harbit O'Hara's?"

"He is, dhin," assented Mr. Flanagan, "shure enough."

Straightening himself, Mr. Gilligan again placed his hand in a friendly manner on the other's shoulder.

"Let the schoolmaster," he explained, "go to Sur Harbit, for Sur Harbit's a magisthrate, an' if there's a man to get ould Pether out, he's the man. An' yid bettther go wid Misther Clarence yirsilf, bekase I'll tell you why: where bisniss is consarned the young schoolmaster has no head at all wid all his book-larnin'."

For a moment Mr. Flanagan, overcome with admiration of his friend's astuteness, could only stare at him speechlessly. Then he shook his hand warmly.

"Luk at that, now," he observed. "What did I always say about the head you've got on thim shoulders, Joseph?"

"Nivir mind me head," returned Mr. Gilligan. "Do you go to Sur Harbit."

"What I say behind yir back I'll say before yir face," said Mr. Flanagan—"that you carry the best head in Ballinabog. Shure there y'are now. An' what more d'you want?"

"Sur Harbit's yir man," observed Mr. Gilligan.

Mr. Flanagan stole another uneasy glance through the window.

"Well, now," said he, "if you don't mind, Joseph, I'll ax you to let me out through yir yard so that I kin go home be the back lane."

"An' why not? But won't you stay for a glass?"

"I'm wanted in the shop, Jo. You know what Mrs. Flanagan is?"

"I do," replied Mr. Gilligan, solemnly.

"Well, Joseph," observed Mr. Flanagan, "it's not that I'm afraid iv that man," waving his hand towards the window, "or any other man. But not to make remark, I'll slip round be the back."

"Right! This way."

"Mind you, Jo," said Mr. Flanagan, as he followed, "it's not afraid iv him I am."

Both, being tall men, lowered their heads at the back doorway as they passed out into the yard. Mr. Gilligan opened the little gate leading to the lane.

"Me frind," said he, "there's no nade to tell Joseph Gilligan that yir not afraid iv that man or any other man. For I know you, an' I knew your father before you."

They shook hands.

"I'll be off now," said Mr. Flanagan. "I'll expict you to-night for a quiet pipe an' a glass in the parlour."

"I'll be there," said Mr. Gilligan. "Take care iv
yourself."

Mr. Flanagan quickly made his way through the
narrow lane, his friend calmly watching him until out
of view.

CHAPTER III

THE EVIL EYE

TWO hours later Clarence Maguire returned. Mr. Flanagan, who was attending customers in the snugery, saw him, but merely stared after him as he limped through the shop. Mr. Flanagan listened to the halting step ; then, resting one hand on the counter, meditatively scratched his head.

"I think," he observed, hesitatingly, "Margit, I'll go upstairs an' see what's wrong with Misther Clarence."

Mrs. Flanagan stood on a chair fixing a string of brogues to a hook in the ceiling.

"You can go where you like," she returned, "an' do what you like. It's all the same to me !"

Stroking down his shirt-sleeves Mr. Flanagan walked to the door to look up and down the street. The town was subsiding to its normal state. A few scattered pigs were passing, followed by a small mob of sheep crushing against each other as the dogs snapped at their ears. On the opposite side Constable Kerrigan slowly paced, gazing under bent brows towards the shop. Mr. Flanagan turned to put his head in at the snugery door to inquire if the customers wanted anything. He then stood irresolutely staring at the shop floor. After some cogitation he walked to the back out through the

small door leading into the hall. Half-way on the stairs he paused, raising his face towards Clarence's garret. The door was closed, but he heard the school-master limping.

Mr. Flanagan went on. Before the door he coughed loudly, then knocked softly with his knuckles. There was no response. Clarence still limped. Mr. Flanagan entering, glanced thoughtfully at his friend.

"Have you had any dinner, Misther Clarence?"

Sitting down, Clarence, letting his hands close nervously on his knees, shook his head. Mr. Flanagan looked vaguely about.

"That's bad," he observed. "But now, sur, if I'm not takin' too great a liberty, what, in the name iv God, is all this worruk about yir gran'father? What did the ould man do at all, at all?"

"He is charged with obstructing the thoroughfare. It is monstrous!" said Clarence, rising excitedly. "He wouldn't hurt a kitten!"

"Well now, you know, Misther Clarence," said Mr. Flanagan, "the law is the quarest invintion. The sorra know I know whin I'm widin the law an' whin I'm widout the law. At the prisint moment I cudn't say whether I haven't bin guilty iv a brache iv the pace meself!"

Clarence, who had sat down again, looked up inquiringly.

"Bekase," explained Mr. Flanagan, lowering his voice, "it's thrue I expostulated wid the constable about the ould man. I just spoke as any dacent man ud spake widout the laste offinse in the wurruld. But," Mr. Flanagan winked with a painful contortion, "I'm not so shure that I haven't put meself in his rache."

"I don't see what he can do to you. You did nothing."

"There y'are!" exclaimed Mr. Flanagan. "Nothin' in the varsal wurruld did I do or say that 'ud offend a babby. But he's one iv those polis you don't know how to take. I dunno where he kem from or what he's doin' here, but he naden't mind puttin' his eye on me, for me carracter's well known in the town iv Ballinabog."

Having heated himself by this self-vindication, Mr. Flanagan took the liberty of helping himself to a glass of water. Clarence, nursing his knee, sat gazing at the floor.

Replacing the glass, Mr. Flanagan drew his arm slowly across his mouth.

"But, iv coorse," said he, "that shows you the quare thing the law is. Not that I'd mind if it wasn't for Patsy's sake. However, what we've to considher now, Mither Clarence, is how we're to get the ould man out. Is there anything now, sur, you cud suggest yirsilf?"

Recovering himself with a shiver Clarence sat upright, staring vaguely at his friend who stood with arms folded, close to the little window.

"Can you think iv nothin'?" urged Mr. Flanagan, gently. "Did the ould man himself say nothin'?"

"He's so terrified that I could scarcely make out what he said. But he said something about having the money to pay a half-year's rent to his landlord——"

"D'you mane Sur Harbit?" interrupted Mr. Flanagan, eagerly.

"Yes. Sir Herbert O'Hara. I forget whether he said the constable took this money or not. But——"

Mr. Flanagan slapped his hands so loudly that Clarence gave a nervous start.

"Why," said Mr. Flanagan, "there y'are. An' doesn't that bear me out?"

"How? I don't understand."

Mr. Flanagan pointed his forefinger steadily at him.

"That me frind, Jo Gilligan," he explained, "has a head on his showlders. I tuk the liberty, sur, iv puttin' the case to Misther Gilligan, an' what were his first wurruds? 'Go,' says he, 'to Sur Harbit. He's yir man,' says he. 'Sur Harbit's the man,' says he, 'to get out ould Maguire, for,' says he, says Misther Gilligan, says he, 'Sur Harbit's a sayniur magisthrate,' says he. There's me frind, Joseph Gilligan, for you!"

Clarence rising, began to button his coat.

"An' why not?" pursued Mr. Flanagan, "Sur Harbit's lost his manshin an' nigh the whole iv his property, but he's a magisthrate all the same, an' belongs to the rale ould stock. He won't see an ould tinant put in jail."

Clarence looked about for his hat.

"I'll go to him," said he, "at once!"

"An' I'll go wid you, if I may take the liberty," said Mr. Flanagan. "Here's yir stick, achushla. Come, now, we'll both go."

Despite his lameness Clarence was half-way down the stairs before Mr. Flanagan had left the room. Going through the private hall Clarence opened the front door. He was about to pass out when he heard a low whistle. Mr. Flanagan, who was on the stairs, jerked his thumb towards the door connecting with the shop.

"Is she?" he whispered.

Clarence nodded. Beckoning him to go on, Mr. Flanagan stole on his toes—his boots audibly creaking—until he reached the shop door, where he became

unable to move. Mrs. Flanagan, still on the chair, turned her head. Mr. Flanagan coughed into his hat.

"I'm just goin' out, Margit," said he, "for a bit iv a walk wid Misther Clarence."

"Misther Flanagan," said his wife, "where you go or what you do is nothin' to me. You may go where you like an' do what you like."

She abruptly turned her back. Slowly scratching his chin, he watched her for a moment, but as she took no further notice, he went out to Clarence who was on the path.

"Perhaps," suggested the schoolmaster, "you had better go back. I can manage very well by myself."

"Take a houl't iv me arrum, Misther Clarence," said Mr. Flanagan, gloomily. "I'll see you through yir bit iv thrubble. She doesn't spare hersilf in the matther iv harrud wurruk, an' mebbe I'm not all I ought to be in the shop. But," with a sigh, "a man can't change his natur, sur, in his ould age."

Ten minutes brought them to the large wooden gate of the Red House, the humble, two-storied residence of Sir Herbert O'Hara and his daughter in their adversity.

A long path led to the house. There was no one about.

"We'll go round be the kitchin where we'll find the ould sarvint," suggested Mr. Flanagan. "She'll be able to tell us iv Sur Harbit's at home."

They went round to the stable yard. The kitchen door was open. Mr. Flanagan rapped on it with his knuckles as he entered.

"God save all here !" he cried.

An old woman, wearing a white frilled nightcap, was stooping over a pot on the fire. She turned her face

shading her eyes with her hand, then without a word continued stirring the contents of the pot.

"Is the masther in, Mrs. Grogarty?" asked Mr. Flanagan.

She made no sign of hearing. He repeated the question. After a moment she turned her head again, putting her hand to the back of her ear.

"Eh? What?" said she.

"She's as deaf as the post," whispered Mr. Flanagan to Clarence who stood behind him. To the old woman he loudly repeated:

"Is the masther in, Mrs. Grogarty?"

Her jaws and chin worked a moment; then she growled:

"No; the masther's not in."

She bent over her work.

"What's to be done now, sur?" asked Mr. Flanagan, turning to Clarence.

"I shall tell her we'll call again," said Clarence.

Limping to the old woman he touched her on the shoulder.

"Tell Sir Herbert——" said he.

She turned sharply. When she saw him she uttered a scream. Dropping the potstick she backed through a small door, all the time screaming, with her hands held before her face the palms outward as if to thrust him away.

"Aw, saints in glory!" she cried, "purtect an' save me! Take him away! Take his eye from off me!"

When she disappeared into her room she closed and bolted the door. Clarence, who had followed her with amazed eyes, turned inquiringly to his companion. Mr. Flanagan shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Don't mind the owld omadhaun, sur," he said.

"Shure she's not right in her head. I dunno why Sur Harbit an' Miss Essie kape her at all at all, only she's bin so long in the family. We'd bettther be goin' anyhow, sur, since Sur Harbit's not within."

Mrs. Grogarty in her room, when she heard their footsteps crossing the yard, craned her neck at the little window to look after them.

"There he goes," she muttered, "wid his lame fut an' aival eye! Saints in glory, purtect me from him night an' day!"

She crossed herself; then sat down on her bed exhausted by her emotions.

CHAPTER IV

AT THE RED HOUSE

AFTER midnight, when Mr. Flanagan, having blown out the candle, was about to get into bed, there was a knock at his bedroom door.

"Who's there?" he called.

"It is I," replied Clarence's voice.

Mr. Flanagan opened the door six or seven inches.

"What's the matther, achushla?" he whispered.

Clarence, carrying his hat and stick, had his coat-collar turned up to his ears.

"Sir Herbert's probably home now," he explained, hurriedly. "I'm going to see him. I came to tell you so that you won't mind my opening the front door."

"Iv coorse not. God bless me," said Mr. Flanagan, opening the door another inch, "it's a sad bisniss. Wud you like me to go wid you, sur?"

"Oh no, thanks. I'll manage."

"What's the matther, Misther Flanagan?" exclaimed a voice under the bedclothes. "Am I to be robbed iv me hard-won rest?"

"Misther Clarence wants to go out," said Mr. Flanagan, apologetically turning his head. "Can I let him have the front doore kay?"

"You can do what you like," replied the smothered voice, "an' go where you like!"

"Well, God be wid you, sur," whispered Mr. Flanagan, as he gently closed the door.

In a few moments Clarence was once more out in the deserted street, making his way by the light of the stars, down the muddy road, towards the solitary Red House.

When he reached the gate he found it bolted. He felt about for the bell-handle, which, when he pulled, came away with several inches of broken wire. He examined the wall. It ran to the turn of the road where it met a ditch having a thick-set hedge. With difficulty he clambered to the top, where he sat resting a moment. When he let himself down carefully he stumbled in a tangle of coarse grass. He made his way quickly, however, through the shrubbery across the meadow patch leading to the house. There was a faint light in an upper window. A dog in the rear began barking.

From the stable yard appeared a clean-shaven young man in stable clothes, holding a lantern aloft.

"Who's there, in the name iv God?" he called.

"You know me," said Clarence, advancing.

"Stan' back, now!" shouted the other, retreating. "I don't know you."

"I'm Clarence Maguire, teacher at the National Schools."

"Shure an so y'are! Why, Misther Maguire, what's the matther? Shure I didn't know a bit iv you. What's wrong, sur?"

"I want to see Sir Herbert!" exclaimed Clarence.

"Shure he's in bed an hour ago."

As he spoke the window above was raised. Sir Herbert thrust out his head.

"Hallo, there!" he exclaimed. "Rafferty, is that you?"

The stableman, stepping nimbly back, looked up, touching his forehead.

"Yis, sur."

"What is all this row about, Rafferty? What's the matter?"

"Misther Maguire, sur, wants to see you."

"Who's Mr. Maguire?"

"Shure he's a tacher in the school, sur. Here he is himself," he jerked his elbow into Clarence's chest. "He'll tell you what he wants himself, sur."

"This is a very extraordinary hour, Rafferty," observed Sir Herbert, in a vexed tone, "for any person to come to see me. Can Mr. Maguire not call to-morrow?"

Stepping away from the side of Mike Rafferty, Clarence looked up apologetically.

"I am extremely sorry," said he, "to have come at such a time. Nothing but an urgent case would have brought me. I beg of you, sir, five minutes' conversation."

"Mr. Maguire," said Sir Herbert, "is this matter so urgent that it cannot wait till daylight?"

"I assure you, sir," said Clarence, eagerly, "I am quite conscious of the apparent rudeness of my visit. But I beg of you five minutes——"

There was a pause. Sir Herbert drew in his head. A soft voice behind him said—

"Father, you must see him."

The two men on the ground gazed up. Sir Herbert put out his head again.

"Rafferty," said he, "admit Mr. Maguire by the back door and light him up the stairs."

The window was closed. Clarence nervously followed Mike Rafferty. In the yard he stood watching the swinging lantern as Mike advanced alone to a small window which he tapped with his knuckles.

"Are you there?" shouted Mike. "Open the back doore iv you plaze."

To this request, although repeated in louder tones several times, there was for some time no response. Presently a clattering noise within, mingled with groans, indicated that Mrs. Grogarty had fallen over a chair. While the two men stared in at the window they were surprised by the sudden opening of the back door.

"The doore's open now," exclaimed Mrs. Grogarty, "bad luck to yiz!"

Having made this remark she disappeared.

"This way, sur," said Mike, as he stepped into the passage, holding the lantern high.

When Clarence followed he saw, above on the landing, Sir Herbert holding a lamp which shed its beams down the staircase.

"Is that Mr. Maguire?" he asked.

"Yis, sur," replied Mike.

"Let him come up at once," was the response.

When Clarence reached the landing it was deserted. Through the open door on the left he saw the lamp on a table. Beside the table in an old leathern-bound arm-chair sat Sir Herbert, with a dressing-gown over his shirt and trousers.

"Come in," he said, as Clarence hesitated.

Clarence entered, looking nervously around.

"Sit down," said Sir Herbert, waving his hand towards a chair next the wall.

Clarence obeyed.

"I presume, sir," observed Sir Herbert, when he had stared at his visitor, "that you have something of immediate importance to explain. But you must be brief, for I am anxious to get to bed."

Rubbing the top of his stick nervously with his palm Clarence raised diffident eyes from the floor.

"I must apologise," he began, "in the first place, for having intruded at such——"

Sir Herbert impatiently waved his hand.

"Very good," said he ; "go on."

"I am very conscious of your kindness," said Clarence, "and of my own bad taste in coming so late. I can assure you, sir, that I fully recognise——"

Sir Herbert tapped the table on which his arm rested.

"Come to the point, sir," he exclaimed, "if you please !"

Clarence pulled his shoulders together.

"Briefly," said he, "it is this. An old friend of mine was arrested to-day on what I believe unjust grounds. He was driving a pig through the street, and it chanced to run against a constable who lost his temper and arrested my—my old friend."

Sitting upright, Sir Herbert, grasping both arms of the chair, stared angrily across.

"Well, sir ?"

"Well, sir," said Clarence, in a melancholy tone, "that is a most unjust proceeding ; and I have ventured, sir, to come to you, knowing you to be a magistrate, to ask you to—to—to try and get my friend liberated."

Pressing his hands firmly against the chair, Sir Herbert raised himself to his feet.

"What, sir !" he exclaimed, "you come here at this

hour 'of the night to talk to me about an old peasant and his pig ? ”

Rising, Clarence leaned diffidently on his stick.

“ I am aware,” said he, “ that this seems a frivolous pretext for disturbing your house at such an hour, but this old man is my—he is one of your own tenants.”

“ Good heavens ! ” said Sir Herbert, “ what has that to do with it ? Now, look here, Mr.—”

“ Maguire,” said Clarence.

“ Well, Mr. Maguire, I shall be very plain with you. I fancy, sir, you think, and no doubt many others think, that because I have retired from my estate—come down in the world you would call it—You think, sir, that you can be familiar with me. Let me tell you, sir,” he struck the table with his open hand, “ you are damnably mistaken ! ”

Folding his arms, he stared at Clarence, who, picking his hat from the floor, prepared humbly to leave. Half-way to the door he paused to look back.

“ He’s a poor old man,” he said, falteringly, “ and your own tenant.”

Sir Herbert stretched forth his right arm.

“ One moment, Mr. Maguire,” said he.

Clarence faced round.

“ A word with you before you go,” said Sir Herbert. “ You have said, very truly, that I am a magistrate. Yes, sir, I am a magistrate, and for that reason, if for no other, I shall not interfere with the due course of justice. The fact of his being my own tenant makes me all the more inflexible. These people must be taught to respect the law. I know them, sir. Your friend was evidently intoxicated——”

“ Excuse me,” said Clarence, warmly—“ excuse me, sir. He told me he was on his way to pay you his

half-year's rent, and he was as sober as I am at the present moment."

"Why, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Sir Herbert.

Clarence looked up surprised.

"Why, my dear fellow!" repeated Sir Herbert, "why did you not say so before? Wants to pay his rent? There can be nothing criminal in a man who is anxious to pay his rent. This puts an entirely different complexion on the matter. If there has been a miscarriage of justice it must be rectified without delay. Now, my love, what brings you here?"

A warm stir of air from rustling garments swept past Clarence. He knew it indicated the presence of Miss O'Hara, even before he glanced at her.

"Well, father, may I know——"

Putting his arm round her, Sir Herbert gently patted her shoulder.

"My dear, this estimable young man—Mr. Maguire of the National Schools——"

As Miss O'Hara glanced quickly round, Clarence as quickly dropped his eyes. She turned with a smile again to her father.

"He has come," explained Sir Herbert, stroking her hair, "at considerable inconvenience to himself, to plead for an unhappy old man who has got into trouble about a pig. An over-officious constable. Yes, Essie, my dear, that is all. An over-officious pig—I mean constable. Have I explained the matter clearly, Mr. Maguire?"

Miss O'Hara turned her head again and Clarence again looked down.

"I deeply regret," said he, "having disturbed Sir Herbert. I am very sorry, but I——"

"My dear sir," interrupted Sir Herbert, "Miss O'Hara will excuse you, I am sure."

"Of course," said Miss O'Hara.

"Exactly. And now, Essie," said her father, "I should like to put on my boots, if you will be good enough to allow me to do so in your presence."

She pushed him gently towards the arm-chair.

"Sit down, dear," said she, "and I shall take off your slippers."

Sir Herbert raised his hand.

"No, no, my dear, nothing of the kind. I protest."

"Well, where are your boots?" exclaimed Essie, looking about.

Clarence seeing them against the wall took them up.

"Thank you," said Essie, sweetly. "Give them to me."

Puffing out his cheeks, Sir Herbert elevated his leg while he tugged at his laces. Essie, kneeling beside him, rested her arms on the chair as she glanced at Clarence. Her gown spread softly around her on the threadbare carpet.

"But, father dear, you have not told me where you are going."

"Going? My dear child, on an errand of mercy: to release the poor old man who has been unjustly thrust into the hands of justice. Confound this lace—it's broken!"

"Let me try to settle it, dear."

She worked herself round in an instant on her knees, taking up his foot on her lap; while he seemed exhausted, gazing at the smoked designs worked on the white plaster of the ceiling by the lamps of bygone years.

"There, father, it's all right. Both boots. Now for your coat." She rose, looking about as she spoke.

"It is so good and kind of you to take all this trouble for a poor, humble old peasant!"

Clarence Maguire started. A vast distance seemed suddenly to intervene between him and this fragile young lady, who was lifting down the coat from its peg close beside him.

"It is so like you, father," she added, as she pulled at the coat, "always thinking of others!"

Sir Herbert was taking off his dressing-gown.

"Well, well, my dear," he observed, "one must not forget that the poor have their sorrows as well as the rich."

Essie, on tiptoe, forced the coat up her father's arms as he stood in shirt-sleeves.

"And now, dear child, goodbye."

She pulled down his face with both hands, softly patting one cheek as she kissed him.

"Go back to bed, my dear. We may not return for a considerable time. The ways of the law are tedious. Now, Mr. Maguire I am at your service."

Clarence Maguire, uncertain whether to bid Miss O'Hara good-night or good morning; to bow or to shake hands — absolutely ignorant of the etiquette demanded by the occasion—simply followed her father, with bent head, down the stairs, while she stood on the landing holding up the lamp to light them down. For months after the memory of this awkward withdrawal tortured him.

CHAPTER V

RELEASED

DAY was breaking when they left the police station with old Peter Maguire. This old man seemed stricken dumb. He raised his head to gaze at his grandson ; his mouth opened for several moments, but his head dropped again without a word. He had lost his hat while Constable Kerrigan was dragging him to the station ; his sleeves hung in rags ; his knees protruded through the trousers.

When Sir Herbert entered the stable yard, he called briskly :

"Rafferty ! Are you there ?"

There was no one to be seen. Going to the stable Sir Herbert sharply repeated his call towards the loft. But there was no response.

"Confound the fellow !" exclaimed Sir Herbert, as he turned away. "He's never here when he's wanted. Come with me, my friends."

Lifting the latch of the back door he entered the kitchen, followed by the others.

"Now, then," said he, "is there any one here, I wonder ? Why, Essie, what is the meaning of this ?"

Miss O'Hara, in black dress with white apron, turned from the table where she had been preparing breakfast.

The old woman, Mrs. Grogarty, was frying rashers over the fire.

"Oh, I see you have brought back the old man," said Essie. "How good of you! Here is a big kiss for you."

Pressing his face between her hands, she stood on tiptoe, giving him a loud, hearty kiss on his thin lips; after which he pushed her gently away.

"My dear," said he, "these people must be hungry. Now, my friends, set to and have breakfast. You will find rough, homely fare. Such as it is, do justice to it."

The old peasant, with mouth agape, turned to fix questioning eyes on Clarence, who pointed to the table. As Mrs. Grogarty lifted the rashers to a large plate old Peter Maguire touched his forehead respectfully to her.

"I am very tired, my dear," said Sir Herbert to his daughter. "I shall go upstairs and rest a little."

Essie, busy at the table, called out to him, "I shall bring up your breakfast in a minute, father."

Sir Herbert came back a step.

"I should like to see you, my good friends," said he, "before you go."

The old peasant, who had sat down, stood up again to touch his forehead. Clarence, unable to eat, sat meekly beside his grandfather.

When Essie went upstairs bearing a small tray with coffee and toast, her father was dozing in the big arm-chair. At her entry he sleepily opened his eyes.

"Thank you, my dear," said he, "I am not hungry."

He closed his eyes again. She placed the tray on the table, moving aside a decanter of brandy. Then she lifted a rug from an old sofa at the other side of the room, placing it around his shoulders. Having made him promise to take some breakfast, she turned down the

lamp. At the door she glanced back at him. He had sunk down into the rug. The morning light fell on his face which seemed to grow older as she studied it. She looked round at the poor furniture, the threadbare carpet. Tears came to her eyes. Hurrying back she poured out a cup of coffee.

"Father, do take this!"

He sat up, and, having poured some brandy into the cup, drank it down. Then, wiping his moustache with a corner of the rug, he settled again to slumber. Standing beside his chair with her hands clasped before her, she watched him until the two men came up the stairs. Shaking Sir Herbert's shoulder, she whispered:

"Do you really wish to see these people, father?"

"Eh, what? What's that?"

He sat straight, rubbing his eyes. The two men entered.

"Essie, my dear," said her father, "two tumblers, please."

Clarence declined the drink, but his grandfather, holding the glass tightly against his breast, looked dazedly round before he drank, then opened and closed his mouth several times as if anxious to say something. They turned to look at him.

"The boneen," he explained, "knocked him down. I said to thim at the station the boneen did it. Isn't that God's truth? I was nivir tuk before. They can do what they like to me now. 'Twas the boneen did it."

"My good friend," said Sir Herbert, "let your mind rest. The matter is at an end. I have arranged it. You will hear no more about it."

The old man touched his forehead.

"I thank yir honour; God bless yir honour. God bless yir ladyship!"

Then, wiping his mouth with his ragged sleeve, he said, huskily :

"'Twas the boneen did it. I was nivir tuk before. I'm disgraced for ivir !"

"Tut, tut, man," said Sir Herbert. "It was an unhappy business, but it's past and gone. Think no more of it."

With trembling hand the old man replaced the tumbler on the table.

"Yiv bin kind t'me, yir honour," said he. "I'm an ould man ; yir honour'll pardin me."

Clarence took his grandfather by the arm.

"Let us be going," said he.

Turning to Sir Herbert, he fixed his eyes steadily on him lest they should wander to Miss O'Hara, who stood with her arms folded on the back of her father's chair.

"I am extremely obliged to you, sir," said he. "I—I thank you very much. Good morning, sir."

"Good morning," said Sir Herbert. "By the way," he added, as they were leaving, "I hope the police returned his money?"

Clarence looked confused a moment, drawing his hand across his forehead. Then, bending down to his grandfather, he whispered something which had the effect of making the old man take from his bosom a roll of notes and silver wrapped in an old handkerchief, which he handed to Clarence, who placed the money on the table.

"He says this is the rent, sir."

Sir Herbert sat straighter than before.

"The rent?" said he, with surprise. "What rent? Oh, bless my soul, yes, of course. I had forgotten. Essie, my love, my receipt-book."

While Miss O'Hara went to the cabinet, Clarence,

having spoken again in a low voice to his grandfather, looked up.

"He says, sir, he does not require any receipt."

"Receipt?" said Sir Herbert. "Of course. Why not? Of course he must have a receipt."

The old man, working with shaking fingers at his collar, kept his mouth open for several moments.

"An it plaze yir honour," said he, "the money's all there. I wudn't insult yir honour be axin' a resait from yir honour. The rint's there, yir honour, iv yid be plased to count it."

"My dear friend, I am perfectly satisfied," said Sir Herbert, "that it is correct to a farthing. The fact is, Maguire, you are a thoroughly honest and upright man. If you insist on not taking a receipt, well and good. You understand," he added to Clarence, "it shall go through the post. Good morning, my friends, good morning!"

"Good morn, yir honour; God bless you," said the old man, "an' God bless her ladyship!"

"He's a good old man," said Essie, when they were gone.

"Yes," assented her father, wearily; "a good, simple old soul."

He groaned. She moved from the back of the chair to look at him.

"What's the matter, father? Are you not well, dear? You have been up all night!"

"It's not that. To think," he replied, pointing to the money, "that I should have to receive this at first-hand! A year ago my agent would have given in his accounts. I feel humiliated to have to deal with these people face to face. May Heaven give me strength to bear it. No, my dear, I am all right; I shall go to bed."

"Yes, do, father dear."

She pushed the window-blind aside to look out.

"They are going down the avenue," said she. "The old man looks so odd without a hat. There is something the matter with the young man's foot."

Her father slowly lifted himself from the chair.

"Essie," said he, "pray do not interest yourself in these people. Do not let your surroundings demoralise you. Pah ! the smell of this filthy money !"

Unrolling the old handkerchief, he thrust the money uncounted into his pocket.

"Why, here's the postman !" exclaimed Essie, turning round with her hand grasping the curtain. "It's later than I thought."

Sir Herbert fixed the rug about his shoulders.

"I am going upstairs to bed," said he. "Essie, put the tumbler in the pocket of my coat. I'll carry the decanter myself. Oh, the curse of poverty ! I have actually to attend on myself. Put the tumbler in my pocket."

"Poor father !" said Essie ; "but it won't last long. We'll be back again soon in the dear old home !"

He sighed as he went out, holding the rug tight by pressing the decanter against his chest.

"To think," he muttered, toiling up the stairs, "I should be reduced to this—the last of the O'Haras !"

Essie ran swiftly down to meet the postman. Sir Herbert paused at his bedroom door, as he heard her calling. Looking over the balusters, he saw her in the hall holding up two letters, one in each hand.

"One for you, and one for me," she exclaimed, "and both from my aunts !"

She ran upstairs. When she handed her father his she hastily opened her own. At the first glance she cried :

"Why, they are in Switzerland!"

While she read her face fell. When she had finished her hands dropped to her sides. She gazed with dismay at her father, who seemed so pleased with his letter that he laid down the rug and decanter at his feet, reading the letter twice over. When his eyes met Essie's her mouth began to twitch.

She thrust her letter into his hand.

"Read mine, father. Do you know what they want? They want me"—with breathless indignation—"to live with them—for ever!"

"Yes, yes," said he, enthusiastically, "two noble-hearted old creatures! They offer me three hundred a year, and for you, my child, a fortune! How good of them! Three hundred a year! A mine of wealth to me now."

"I shall never write to them again!" exclaimed Essie. "The idea! It is an insult."

Her father, who had been hurriedly reading her letter, glanced up surprised.

"I beg your pardon, Essie. Three hundred a year an insult? How? What do you mean? Do I understand——"

"To suppose," said Essie, "that you would sell me for three hundred a year! I shall write back and give them a bit of my mind. Father, it is an insult to you."

"I beg your pardon, my dear—an insult?"

She threw her arms round his neck.

"To think that I should leave you, my own dear father, because you have become poor! And they would bribe me with promise of a fortune. No, thank Heaven, I shall never leave you, my own dear father!"

" My brave, noble girl ! Heaven bless you ! These sentiments are—they are worthy of an O'Hara ! "

" Yes, father. Kiss me ! "

When he had embraced her she went downstairs, but paused to look back as he was about to enter his room.

" Never to leave you, father ! "

" No, my bird, never ! "

In his room he hastily poured out some whiskey. As he raised the glass he paused to listen. Downstairs Essie was blithely singing as she opened the windows to let in the fresh morning air.

" Destiny ! " he muttered. " Three hundred a year ! "

CHAPTER VI

THE FLANAGANS AT HOME

LITTLE Patsy Flanagan stood in the yard watching his big father feeding the pigs. Patsy's face was very red. He held his cloth cap in his hand.

Pig-feeding he had always found interesting. But at present he was absorbed in private trouble. Owing to the squealing of the pigs he could not attract his father's attention. A cloud of steam from the back door warned him that his mother was busy at the washtub. Mr. Flanagan, in shirt-sleeves, having sufficiently stirred the food in the trough, stood up straight, blowing out his cheeks with an air of relief.

"Daddy," whispered Patsy.

"Hullo, Patsy, there y'are. Where have you bin all day?"

Patsy glanced towards the steam.

"Lukin' for birds' nests."

"An' how many did you get?"

"None at all," replied Patsy; "but I got me britches torn."

Opening his eyes very wide, Mr. Flanagan softly whistled.

"Agin? Saints presarve us, Patsy, yir a terrible

hand at tarin' yir clothes. What'll yir mother say now ? ”

“ I cudn't help it,” said Patsy, desperately. “ The thorns did it.”

“ Where's the tear ? ” asked his father.

Patsy turned round. Surveying the damage, his father whistled again.

“ Bedad, this is a bad bisniss, Patsy. I cudn't stitch that. I'm aqial to an ornery tear, but this bates me intirely ! ”

At this hopeless declaration Patsy, looking up into his father's face, began to whimper.

“ Well, alanna,” said his father, softly, “ what can't be cured must be indured. You'll only have to ax yir mother to minnd yir britches.”

Patsy rubbed the crown of the cap into the corner of his eye.

“ She'll bate me ! ” he whimpered.

Raising his hat, Mr. Flanagan scratched his head, while he stared at the pigstye for inspiration.

“ Well, well,” he said at length. “ I'd better smuggle you upstairs an' do the bist I can wid a nadle an' a bit iv thread. But haven't you got a pin about you ? ”

Patsy felt the collar of his jacket ; his father likewise searching about his own clothes, but without success.

“ Wait a minit,” said Mr. Flanagan, “ I've wan in the back iv me collar. Now dhin, turn round, an' I'll thry an' pin you up a bit till we git upstairs.”

Patsy turned. While his father, kneeling, laboured at the rent, the face of Mrs. Flanagan appeared furtively at the back door through the steam.

Puffing out his cheeks again Mr. Flanagan rose, assisting himself with the wall of the stye.

"That'll do for the prisint," said he. "Make yir way upstairs—yir mother's in the kitchen stapin' the clothes. Don't let her notice anythin' wrong, but just whistle a jhoon or sing a bit as you go through the kitchen. God forgive me for makin' such a big hypocrite out iv such a little chap ! But shure it can't be helped, an' we'll do pinnace enough for it by an' by. Now away you go, me boy ; an' mind, whin you get to the top tap at the winda up there, I'll go up afther you. But we mustn't go togither or yir mother 'd suspect somethin' an' dhin it 'ud be all up the spout wid the two iv us."

Having attended to these instructions, Patsy edged slowly to the doorway. He dimly saw his mother through the steam, immersed to the elbows in the tub of clothes. While sidling past he made a faint attempt to whistle, but abandoning the attempt, broke into a feeble song which stuck in his throat. When he was half-way across the kitchen his mother turned her head sharply.

"Is that you, Patsy ?"

This challenge arrested him dumbfounded. His mother, still kneading the clothes, looked over her shoulder.

"Where have you bin ?" she asked.

"Only out takin' a walk," he replied, feebly.

"Only out takin' a walk ? Yiv bin out all this live-long day," she exclaimed, "over the fields an' over the roads ; up hill and down dale ; here, there, an' everywhere ! Come here, till I luk at you."

"I'm only goin' upstairs," protested Patsy.

"Come here, this momint ! How dar you be disibadient to me ? But what kin I ixpict whin those that ought to know bettther incourage you to flout an' jeer yir mother ; to fleer an' jeer the mother that works

hirsilf to the bone for you. Come here, this minint, you rampagin' young villin !”

Patsy knew from lifelong experience that when his mother became rhythmical—during which she had a fearful facility for inventing strange words—escape was impossible. Resigning himself to fate he advanced with downcast face. She glanced critically at him.

“Yis, there y’are wid yir head hangin’ down. Nivir a dacent luk in yir face nor a helpin’ hand for the mother that reared you. But it’s out careerin’ up an’ down an’ down an’ up while I scrub an’ rub till me arrums ache thryin’ to kape a roof over you and a bit an’ sup to gormandise you. That’s the reward I get !”

Patsy looked anxiously towards the door, but his father was not visible. Then he stared up helplessly at his mother. She churned up the clothes with a sudden vigour which startled him.

“What are you turnin’ an’ twistin’ about ?” she asked. “Can’t you kape quiet for two minits at a time ? Turn round.”

He kept his face set towards her.

“I’m not twistin’ an’ turnin’,” he expostulated.

“Turn round,” she repeated.

Reluctantly he obeyed, at the same time unable to keep from looking over his shoulder to watch her face. Taking her arms from the tub she elevated them in the air.

“Saints in glory, luk at the state iv his britches !”

In the midst of his distress Patsy heard at this moment a groan from the vicinity of the pigstye. He knew then that his father gave him up for lost. He rubbed his knuckles into his eyes.

“I cudn’t help it,” he explained. “The hedge stuck in me.”

"The hedge stuck in you! I'll stick in you. Here's the reward I get for slavin' day an' night to kape the roof over you. Nothin' 'll do you but roam an' foam all round the country, tarin' an' rearin', jumpin' an' thumpin'. The hedge stuck in you! I suppose you think I can turn round ivry minit iv the day an' stitch an' darn for you till I work the flesh off me bones!"

Patsy's muddy knuckles left streaks across his tear-stained cheeks.

"I don't want you to stitch an' darn," said he. "Me daddy stuck a pin in me britches."

"Yir daddy stuck a pin in yir britches! Yir daddy this and yir daddy that! He's a nice daddy lettin' you rage wild like a mad Injin, growin' up to disgrace yirself and disgrace the mother that reared you. But little thanks an' little thought you have for the mother that reared you. Yir daddy stuck a pin in yir britches!"

Wiping her hands vigorously in her apron, she knelt down to examine more closely the damage; each successive exclamation of horror striking a chill to Patsy's heart.

"Take thim off," she said, rising. "Take thim off, an' I'll stitch thim. What's to become iv you, God only knows, for you do nothin' but tear an' wear the clothes off yir back from mornin', noon to night. Take thim off an' let the mother that slaves afther you ivry hour iv the day, stitch thim!"

Bursting into tears Patsy walked slowly to a long form beside the fireplace where, with much difficulty, he at length divested himself of the garment, his mother meanwhile dwelling on his vices while she hunted for needle and thread.

"The Lord give me patience," she said, snatching the trousers from his trembling hands, "to bear wid

me trials, for it's little incouragemint I get from you or yir father. But whin I'm dead an' gone an' the grass grows green over me grave maybe then you an' yir father 'll be sorry for the life you led me." She sat down, crossing her knees, while she bent over the trousers. "Yis, you'll be sorry, no doubt, whin yiv laid me in me cowl'd grave. But it'll be too late. All yir cryin' an' sighin' won't bring me back to life!"

Mr. Flanagan looked furtively through the window. He saw Patsy seated on the form facing him, the little shirt just reaching to his knees. When Patsy glanced up through his tears his father held aloft a big apple. Somewhat comforted Patsy ventured to glance towards his mother's bent head.

"I'm shiverin' wid the cowl'd," said he.

He drew up his legs to rub them. Either this reckless complaint or the fact that Mrs. Flanagan found the stitching more difficult than she had anticipated, gave her an increased accession of ill-temper.

"I'll shiver you!" said she. "I suppose you think that bekase yir father lets you do what you like an' say what you like an' go where you like that you can jeer yir mother to her face. I'll tache you that I'm misthriss in this house. Yiv bin let go on too long, an' now there's no gettin' any good iv you. But iv yir father doesn't know his jooty towards you, thank God I do!"

Having finished the trousers she stood up to look round. Patsy instantly gave a howl as she took down a cane from the wall.

"I know me jooty towards you," she repeated, "an' I'll do it."

Advancing, with the trousers slung over her left arm, she swished the cane in the air. In an instant Patsy

was cowering behind the form. His mother slashed at his bare legs.

"I know me jooty!" said she. "Tarin' an' rearin' till me patience is exhausted!"

"Daddy!" screamed Patsy, as the cane fell swiftly across his calves. "Oh, daddy, daddy!"

"Yis, daddy, daddy," said Mrs. Flanagan, further exasperated by this appeal. "You may thank yir daddy for the state yir in, a disgrace to me an' to yirself. Come out iv that. Come out iv that this instant!"

Grasping his collar she dragged forth his writhing body. Holding his head under her arm she threw away the cane to have free play with her palm. At each smack Patsy shrieked, "Oh, daddy! daddy!" until Mr. Flanagan, unable to bear it longer, came in with an expression of assumed surprise.

"What's the matther here?" he asked.

"I'll daddy you!" exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan, with another slap. "Now, then, sit up there and put on yir britches, you disgrace. Sit up this instant or it's more I'll give you!"

With bitter sobs Patsy climbed to the form, his mother angrily haranguing him while she dressed him. Wearing a self-conscious air of being an hundred miles away, Mr. Flanagan slowly filled his pipe, his back to the fire.

"It's nothin' 'll do you," said Mrs. Flanagan, "but scamper an' ramper round the length an' breadth iv the earth till I'm fairly at me wits ind to know what to do wid you or what will become iv you. An' thim that ought to exorcise a sthrong hand over you lets you do what you plase an' go where you plase."

Coughing behind his huge hand Mr. Flanagan glanced down at Patsy's woe-begone face. Then he turned

slowly to take a live coal in the tongs to light his pipe.

"But I'll soon be taken away," said Mrs. Flanagan, forcing the buttons into their places. "An' then you an' those belongin' to you 'll know what you've lost!"

This provoked a fresh burst of tears from Patsy which his father strove to check by furtively taking the apple from his pocket to flash it in the light. At length, with a prolonged groan, Mrs. Flanagan rose from her knees.

"You may go now where you like an' when you like!" she exclaimed. "I wash me hands iv you."

At the moment of release Patsy rushed to his father, to whose knees he tightly clung. Mr. Flanagan, taking his hand from his pocket, softly patted the mop of white curls.

"We'll go out to the yard," he whispered, "an' luk at the pigs, Patsy."

Mrs. Flanagan's exertions had not tired her. Already, having resumed her station at the tub, she was turning up her sleeves anew.

"That's right," said she. "That's the way. Encourage him to flout an' jeer his mother. That's the reward I get for kapin' the roof over him!"

Gazing over Patsy's head—which was stuck into his knees—Mr. Flanagan looked in solemn silence for several moments at his wife. Then, taking the pipe from his lips, he said, in an expostulatory tone:

"Margit, that's what I nivir did an' what I'll nivir do, plase God!"

Plunging her arms into the clothes Mrs. Flanagan raised a fresh burst of steam.

"No," said she, "iv coorse not. It's blind an' deaf I am."

Again solemnly regarding her, Mr. Flanagan seemed for some time to be on the point of speech ; but unable to frame a satisfactory comment, he said nothing. Taking Patsy's hand he led him out.

They did not stop in the yard, but went through the back gate across the lane, walking in silence until they came to a field. When they had traversed half the footpath here, Patsy, who was still intermittently sobbing with spasmodic jerks of the chin, said to his father :

" Why did you let her bate me ? "

Mr. Flanagan ruminated a while over this. At length, with profound gravity, he addressed his son :

" Patsy, it's no plisure for me to see yir mother bate you. I'd rather she'd bate meself. Bekase——" here he paused to look pityingly down at the curly head, but losing the thread of his remarks, went on, " No doubt it sames hard to you, an' I know that. But—yir mother manes well, Patsy."

" She hurt me," said Patsy, rubbing his back. " She hurt me, daddy."

Mr. Flanagan put his hand in his coat-pocket.

" Hould out yir hand, Patsy," said he. " Here's the apple. Ate it ! "

They passed through a gap in the hedge into another field where there was a stream, towards which they went. After a while Mr. Flanagan said, impressively :

" What I want to say to you is this, Patsy. It's wrong to cheek yir mother, an' you shudn't do it. Why ? Bekase it shows want iv rispict. An' I'll say this for yir mother, Patsy—she's brought you up whin you wor too small to bring up yirsilf. She worked harrud for you whin you wor a babby. So I say to you, an' rimimbir me wurruds—you shudn't cheek yir mother."

Patsy, who had been biting the apple, took it from between his teeth to rub his knuckles into his eyes.

"I didn't cheek her, daddy," he protested.

His father sighed.

"Well, well. Don't begin to cry again, achushla. There's a bird's nest I found for you over in the hedge beyant the sthrame. We'll go an' luk at it an' see if the chicks are out. Don't cry any more, Patsy, for yiv cried enough to-day to last the length iv a wake."

The ditch was too broad for Patsy to jump, but his father, taking him lightly in his arms, stepped across it. There was an exciting hunt for the nest. When discovered, Patsy, lifted high on his father's shoulder, peered rapturously through the brambles.

"They're out, daddy!" he yelled. "The chickeens are out. They've got yalla bills!"

"Patsy, allana, don't jump about on me showlder," suggested his father, mildly, "or you'll rowl into the hedge on the top iv yir head. Kape still."

"They're openin' their yalla bills!" shrieked Patsy. "Will I git wurrums for thim to ate?"

"They're too young to ate wurrums, Patsy. They're only scaldies. Patsy, avic, you gev me a kick in the mouth wid yir heel. Modherate yirsilf, or you'll kick ivry tooth in me head down me throat."

"Can't we take thim home, daddy?" shouted Patsy.

"Is it take poor little scaldies like that home? Shure they'd be dead in the mornin'. Now, you've looked at thim enough. You'll have to come down."

"They've throats as yalla as their bills!" cried Patsy, excitedly. "They're young thrushes, I think."

"Ay, I daresay, they're young thrushes, Patsy. That was a powerful blow you gev me in the chest. Come down, avic. I'm tired howldin' you. Down you come!"

Patsy came down, kicking the air in his excitement. His father with difficulty persuaded him to turn homewards. During the walk back Patsy volubly explained the best methods of rearing scaldies.

"Shure, I forgot," he added. "If we touched thim now their mother 'ud desart thim."

"An' there y'are," observed his father, anxious to improve the occasion. "That's the differ, you see, Patsy, betwane your mother an' the mother iv the scaldies. Your mother 'ud nivir desart you. An' she takes more care iv you, if anythin', than the scaldies' mother."

"Ay, but their mother," suggested Patsy, "nivir bates the little scaldies in the nest, daddy."

Ruminating on this, Mr. Flanagan at length said slowly :

"Patsy, it may be that you don't larn yir tasks as well as might be desired. But this I'll say—yiv great nateral ability, iv you cud only turn it to account. But plase God, you will by and by."

Presently Patsy, being tired, was lifted into his father's strong arms, where he blissfully fell asleep. Mr. Flanagan trudged homewards with his burden held fast.

"An' she hurt you," he murmured to himself, looking down at the little restful face ; "an' you that small ! Well, I suppose she manes well !"

And thus, as the evening shadows fell, with his boy in his arms, he re-entered his home.

CHAPTER VII

SIR HERBERT'S ACCOUNT

HAVING carried Patsy upstairs, Mr. Flanagan laid him, still asleep, on the bed, covering him with a quilt. Before leaving the room he placed a fresh apple on the pillow.

It had been a slack day in the shop. When Mr. Flanagan passed through it there was no customer. He went from the snuggerly into the parlour. On the hard, black sofa opposite the street window sat his wife. She was studying an account.

"Thirteen pound three an' fourpinse," she observed, taking no notice of her husband's entry. "That's the thanks I get for slavin' night an' day, wearin' meself to the bone. Runnin' on for five months widout a pinny paid, as if Sur Harbit O'Hara wasn't bound to pay his debts."

Thoughtfully contemplating her, Mr. Flanagan scratched his chin.

"That's a power iv money," said he.

He sat down on the nearest chair, slowly rubbing his knees.

"A power iv money," he added. "It's time he paid off somethin'. Yi'd better write to Sur Harbit an' ax him for somethin' on account."

Abruptly raising her arms Mrs. Flanagan looked at the ceiling.

"Oh, that I was born," she exclaimed, "to worry an' hurry into me tomb. Not a sowl in the place to give me help or counsil in me need. But it's here I go, an' there I go, at the beck an' call iv ivrybody, as if I had twenty heads to me body an' fifty eyes in me head. Write to him! There's counsel and advice in me need! Write to him till he throws the letther in the fire! As if he hasn't been written to and written to till the heart iv me is sore in me body an' me head is turnin' round!"

Coughing apologetically behind his hand, Mr. Flanagan gazed in a stupefied manner at his boots.

"Thirteen pound three an' fourpinse," added Mrs. Flanagan, with bitter emphasis, under her breath.

Mr. Flanagan crossed his legs uneasily, but uncrossed them again. At length he looked up.

"But iv I go to him," said he, desperately, "what, in the name iv glory, am I to say to him? Shure I'm no hand at that sort iv thing. Perhaps iv you were to write agen—he's bound to take notice iv you put it sthrong."

She rhythmically beat her knees.

"Oh, the pity iv it!" she exclaimed. "To have a bisniss an' a shop an' a kinnection an' to have no head to it! A babby in its swaddlin' clothes 'ud be a king to some wid the forrums iv min. But it's sneered at an' jeered at I am from the highest to the lowest bekase I want to kape a roof over me child an' bekase I want to keep him from bein' dhragged to the poor-house where there's many 'ud be glad to see him! Worried and hurried, here an' there, until I'm in me grave, an' then people 'll be satisfied. That's what they want—to hurry me an' scurry me into me grave!"

Mr. Flanagan stared at the coloured racing print above the black sofa till the stretched necks of the horses seemed burned on his brain.

"Margit," said he, in measured tones, "there's no wan wants to see you in yir grave, thanks be to God; an' no wan that I know of wants to dhrive you there. But there's this to be said, an' I say it now before you, and I say this, that"—he slowly struck his right fist on his knee—"you can't go an' worry a gintleman who's the bist blood in the counthry, whatever misfortunes may have happened to him. Bekase—I put it to you like this: iv Sir Harbit was an ornery man I cud up an' say to him (iv his name was Murphy), 'Murphy, you owe me five pound; pay it down on the nail.' It's an honor in a way to have the gintry on yir books, an' you must give thim time. That's the long an' short iv it!"

Having cleared his mind in this manner Mr. Flanagan, folding his arms, gazed fixedly through the window. But his wife emitted something between a sob and an hysteric laugh.

"Babbies in swaddlin' clothes!" she exclaimed. "Oh, wurra an' wurra an' wurra's the day! To lie down an' let brokin-down gintry walk on yir face. No!" appealing with hands and eyes to the ceiling, "not a sowl to give me a shred iv comfort, or a hand to help me on! But it's wurruk the flesh off me bones, and no one to say, 'Go an' rest!' But it won't be for long—it won't be for long!"

Mr. Flanagan was casting about for some conciliatory remark when, to his intense relief, he heard some one tapping on the counter. Going out he saw Mike Rafferty with a red muffler round his throat, leaning his arm on the counter while he listlessly counted the rows of bottles on the shelves.

"Arra, me bould Mike," said Mr. Flanagan, genially, "is that yirsilf? An' how's the wurruld usin' you?"

Mike drew the back of his hand across his mouth.

"Ah, bad luck to it," said he, hoarsely. "Shure there's no getting' on at all in it. I'm afeared I'll nivir do much in it."

Mr. Flanagan looked closely at him.

"What's the matter wid you?" he asked. "Yir voice is rusty, Mike."

"Ay," assented Mike, uneasily. "I've got a cowl'd on me chist, lyin' out in the loft. Shure it's a rottin' job I'm at, sarvin' widout any wages, an' mindin' an ould stable, an' divil a horse in it."

"Yiv got a bad cowl'd on yir chist, shure enough," said Mr. Flanagan, kindly. "Is that the raisin yir lettin' yir beard grow?"

Mike rubbed his hand roughly across his chin.

"It purtects the throat, I'm tould," he growled.

"An' what kin I do for you, Mike?"

"The masther wants a quart iv the best brandy."

Stepping back to stare, Mr. Flanagan thoughtfully scratched his head.

"Be me sowl," said he, "that puts me in the divil's hole intirely. Whisht!" He glanced back over his shoulder towards the half-open door of the parlour; then bending forward towards Mike, whispered behind his hand, "Shure she's bin just ballyraggin' about the masther's account. I forgit how much it is, but bedad, I belave it's gone beyond the beyonds."

"Well, I've nothin' to do wid that," said Mike, doggedly. "I'm only sint to dilivir the missage."

"Well, now, I don't want to do anythin' onneighbourly; and shure, for my part, Sur Harbit's welcome to anythin' in the shop. For, shure, though he's hard

up, I know he's a rale gentleman, an' 'ud pay iv he had it. But it's not mesilf, mind you, Mike ; it's the missis inside. She won't give him any more credit, an' that's the long an' short iv it."

When he had said this Mr. Flanagan gazed sympathetically at Mike, who abruptly tightened the muffler at his throat.

"All right," said Mike. "I'll go back and tell him he's not to get it. I'll have to kape out iv his way for a couple iv days. The divil wouldn't hould him when's he's in a timper ! Good evenin', Misther Flanagan."

"Wait a moment. Hould on a minit, Mike. Shure it goes to me heart to refuse Sur Harbit, a dacent gentleman ivry inch. Whisht ! Don't talk loud, or she'll hear you ; she's ears like a ferrit. A quart more or less won't make much differ an' shure perhaps you wudn't mind hintin' to him what I tould you ? Tell him it's not from me, but the missis. Wait now, and I'll put up a quart bottle in a bit iv paper."

Still with his fixed air of melancholy indifference Mike turned again, resting his elbow on the counter. Selecting a bottle from the shelf Mr. Flanagan carefully dusted it in the tail of his coat.

"Here y'are now, Mike. But mind you put it in yir pocket, bekase if she saw you——"

The hand which took the bottle was not that of Mike, but of Mrs. Flanagan. Mr. Flanagan fell back a pace behind her with his mouth open.

"No," said she, "not while I have an arm on me body or breath to draw will I see me child robbed an' me home desicrated. No !" she caught her breath, "or stand by an' be robbed before me face. May God forgive you, Misther Flanagan. Misther Mike Rafferty, go back to yir masther an' tell him that while I live an'

have breath to draw, while God spares me, I'll do me duty by me child ; an' that whin he pays what he owes, he can then send you or any other white-faced spalpeen to flout an' jeer an' insult me in me own home ! ”

“ I beg yir pardin, ma'am,” said Mike, “ but, wid all due respect to you ma'am, I'm no more a spalpeen than y'are yirsilf. D'you mind now ? Just kape yir harrud wurruds to yirsilf.”

Mr. Flanagan leaned forward with his hand to his mouth.

“ Mike,” he whispered, “ go off, in the name of God ! ”

“ I'll tell you this, ma'am, an' I don't mind sayin' it to yir face,” said Mike. “ No, Mr. Flanagan, ixcuse me, I won't go off till I've said what I want to say. I'm not afraid, ma'am, to tell you to yir face that I think as much iv me charracter as you do iv yours. An' I don't mane to let you or any one else say a wurrud agin it. For I kem here——”

“ Mike,” said Mr. Flanagan, in low tones, “ what's the use iv argufyin' ? Shure it's not a bit iv use in the wurruld. Can't you go now, an——”

Mrs. Flanagan had turned to replace the bottle on the shelf. While thus engaged, she said over her shoulder :

“ There's Mither Flanagan to take yir part. That's right ! ”

“ I'm not takin' his part any more than I'm takin' the part iv anybody else,” protested her husband. Bending over the counter he mildly pressed Mike's hand, whispering, “ Mike, avic, there's no good in stayin'. It'll be all right. I ax you now, for me own sake, to lave the place. I've no ill-will agin you.”

Mike buttoned up his coat. “ All right, Mither

Flanagan," said he. "I bid you good evenin' ; but mind you, it's the last time I'll come here to be insulted. That's all."

With erect head Mike walked out, self-conscious pride visible even in the stiffening of his back. When he stepped from the door some one touched him on the shoulder. Looking up he met the searching eyes of Constable Kerrigan, who peered so closely into his face that Mike felt the hot breath. Kerrigan gripped him above the elbow.

"Can I say a wurrud to you, me man?" said the constable.

But Mike, snatching himself from the grasp, suddenly turned and ran down the street at top speed.

Kerrigan gazed, dumbfounded, after him. After some moments he walked slowly up and down, cogitating, with his thumbs in his belt.

Meanwhile Mr. Flanagan, oblivious of this encounter, stood with his back to the door filling his pipe. His wife dusted the bottles.

"Yiv behaved well to-day," said she. "Very well yiv behaved. Y'ought to be proud iv yirsilf."

Mr. Flanagan shoved down the tobacco into the bowl of his pipe with his forefinger.

"Anyhow," said he, speaking with bent head, "I don't see what's to be gained be insultin' a dacent, rispictible young man that only came to diliver a missage."

"Oh, yis ; dacent and rispictible. That's right. Take his part ! Take ivry one's part but the part iv yir own family——"

"I'm not takin' any one's part," said Mr. Flanagan, looking up, "an' I tould you that before."

She stopped dusting to turn her head.

"It's a nice state iv things," said she, "that two minits

afther you heard the state iv Sur Harbit's account you cud go an' hand out a bottle iv brandy for him. Whin you knew his account——"

Mr. Flanagan brought down his fist heavily on the counter.

"Margit," said he, with unexpected sternness, "I've hard enough about that account. I'll go an' see Sur Harbit, an' let that be an end to it. Iv he has the money I'll get it, an' if he hasn't I won't."

Before she could reply he had passed her on his way to the yard to smoke his blackened clay, alone with the stars and pigs.

CHAPTER VIII

A DETERMINED MAN

NEXT morning, while Mrs. Flanagan stooped over the frying-pan, Patsy sat on the form beside her.

"Will the brekfist soon be ready, mother?" he ventured to inquire.

She turned to him with a slice of bread on the fork.

"Is there nothin'," said she, "in the wurruld you think about from morn till night but somethin' for yir stummick? Have you no boots to clane or no yard to swape or no tasks to larn, but you must be always comin' to yir mother for somethin' to eat, wid nivir a thought where it comes from or how it's got, so long as you git it? Yir a fine specimint of a boy, God forgive you an' them that encourages you!"

"Shure daddy's late for brekfist," suggested Patsy, "an' I'll be late for school."

"Late for school? The devil a hair you care iv you wor late ivry day iv the wake. It's treachery an' desate yir practisin' now, wid nivir a dacent straight wurrud for yir unfortunit poor mother that slaves afther you day an' night, an' nobody to give her a kind word or say a good wurrud for her. But it's sorry y'll be whin I'm cowl'd an' stiff in me grave——"

"Here's daddy!" exclaimed Patsy.

But Mr. Flanagan took no notice either of his son's rapture or the perplexity on his wife's face. He was in his shirt-sleeves, to save his coat during the meal. The shirt was a clean one, the clothes his Sunday suit. Seating himself at the table he carefully spread his red handkerchief on his knees. He took up a knife and fork, resting the ends of their handles firmly on the table while he gazed solemnly into space.

To Patsy the sight of his father in his best clothes was always one of pride, but to see them on a week-day confounded him. Several moments passed as the pan hissed, during which the general merchant maintained his fixed attitude. At length Patsy, having feasted his eyes on his father, bent forward to pluck his mother's gown.

"Daddy's in his Sunda clothes, mother," he whispered.

She lifted the pan so suddenly from the fire that Patsy fell off the form in alarm.

"Will you nivir be done," she exclaimed, "wid yir worryin' an' hurryin'? You aggravated me this mornin' sittin' there wid a face on you till I dunno whether I'm on me head or me heels."

While speaking she placed the rashers and eggs on the table. Picking himself up, Patsy bent to brush the dust from his knees. Mr. Flanagan proceeded to say grace with bowed head—a ceremony he never neglected—after which, with the gravest deliberation, he helped himself from the plate of rashers. When Mrs. Flanagan had poured out the tea, she turned to find Patsy standing wistfully behind her.

"Show me yir hands," said she.

He held out begrimed palms. She seized him by the arm.

"The dirt iv thim !" she exclaimed. "An' you want to sit down an' ate clane bread wid hands like that. Am I nivir to be done scrubbin' an' rubbin' at you an' you nivir a bit claner ten minits after all me thrubble ? Shure there was nivir a woman heart-scalded with a child before ! Come over here an' git yir hands claned."

Having brought him to the dresser at the other side of the kitchen she wiped his hands with a cloth. While giving his face an extra scrub, she whispered :

"Ax yir father where he's goin', but don't tell him I tould you."

This request was emphasised with a squeeze of the elbow which sent the blood to Patsy's head. However, equally anxious to solve the mystery, he had scarcely sat down to his breakfast when he looked brightly at his father.

"Where are you goin' to, daddy ?"

Ignoring this question, Mr. Flanagan silently conveyed a forkful of fried egg to his mouth. Patsy continued his breakfast until an admonitory cough from his mother at the fireplace made him look up again.

"Where are you goin' to, daddy ?" he repeated.

For a moment Mr. Flanagan ignored this as before ; then, pausing in the act of reaching forward for the toast, he looked thoughtfully across the table.

"Patsy," said he.

Mrs. Flanagan listened intently.

"Yis, daddy ?" said Patsy, quickly.

"Patsy," said Mr. Flanagan, gravely, "are you atin' yir brekfist ?"

"I am, daddy."

"Then," said his father, "ate it."

When at last he rose, Mr. Flanagan looked steadily towards his wife, who was bending over the fire.

"Margit," said he.

She turned.

"Margit," said Mr. Flanagan, impressively. "I'll thrubble you, ma'am, for that account iv Sur Harbit's, iv convanient."

Without a word Mrs. Flanagan, somewhat awed by his manner, left the kitchen. During her absence Mr. Flanagan stood with his back to the fire, his thumbs in his trousers-pockets. Patsy clambered down from his chair.

"May I go wid you, daddy?" he breathlessly asked.

Mr. Flanagan regarded his son for a moment in abstracted silence.

"Patsy," said he, at length, "go upstairs an' bring me down me Sunda coat that you'll find on the bed."

"Yis, daddy," said Patsy, alertly.

"An' mind," said his father, arresting him by the words as he reached the door, "don't let a speck iv dust go nigh or near thim. Mind, now."

"All right, daddy."

Mother and son re-entered at the same time. Mr. Flanagan first put on his coat; then, taking the account from his wife, looked at it steadily.

"Thirteen pound three an' fourpinse," said he.

"That's right," assented Mrs. Flanagan.

"I'm goin' now," said he. "Iv coorse I naden't tell you where. This account has got to be paid. That," he nodded his head firmly, "is what I've got to say on that pint. It's to be paid or it's not to be paid. If it's to be paid, I'm the man to see to that. A woman's tongue," he added, gazing over her head, "is, no doubt, a great weapin, Margit, but a man wid detarmination, a man that's made up his mind, that's a diffirnt matter from gabble."

To this remark with its implied rebuke, Mrs. Flanagan made no rejoinder. As his father prepared to leave, Patsy called out piteously :

"May I go wid you, daddy ?"

His father turned.

"Patsy," said he, "as far as I'm consarned, you may go wid me, iv yir mother lets you."

"Sartinly you may go, Patsy," said his mother, with unexpected geniality. "Get yir cap, avic."

Patsy's face brightened. Fetching his cap he raced after his father.

When they had gone some distance down the street, Mr. Flanagan broke a protracted silence.

"Patsy, whin I spoke iv gabble to yir mother, I used langwidge which I should not have used. D'you mind ?"

"Yis, daddy."

"Well, now, take heed an' mind what I say. I regrit them wurruds. Why ?"

With profound inattention Patsy fingered the marbles in his pocket.

"Bekase," added his father, "yir mother manes well."

The day was bright. Patsy fired a few stones at the sparrows. After an exciting chase of a stray calf he returned breathless to his father's side. They were soon close to the gate of the Red House. Mr. Flanagan placed his hand on his boy's head.

"Patsy," said he, "whin you grow up to be big, an' take charge iv the shop an' the primisis an' the pigs an' the poulthry, these are my wurruds for you to rimimbir—Be detarmined ! Iv there's an account—now, mind what I say—iv there's an account in yir book goes across a sartin figgir, stop it at wanst. Mind, now. Stop it. Be detarmined. Don't have any

nonsinse about it. The man that's not detarmined 'll go to the wall as shure as a gun. Them's the wurruds I spake to you this day."

After this solemn exhortation Mr. Flanagan, pressing his shoulder to the gate, heaved it in after a brief pressure.

Before them stretched the path leading to the house. On their left the scattered trees, the lawn overgrown with coarse grass from which a lean cow was endeavouring to extract nutriment. The Red House itself presented a brighter aspect than usual. Essie had put some white blinds on the windows. The steps to the front door were dusted. On the upper window to the left a blind was drawn down.

Both Patsy and his father had become slower in pace and graver in expression. Mr. Flanagan, halting half-way, looked up steadily at the window where the blind was drawn down.

"That," said he, "is Sur Harbit's room. He's not out iv bed, yit. I hope I haven't come at the wrong time."

These words were spoken to himself, but Patsy, having heard them, looked up at his father, and observing, for the first time, an almost imperceptible change—a faint hesitation—in him, became awe-stricken.

"We'll go round," said Mr. Flanagan, taking Patsy's hand, "be the back yard an' see if Mike's there."

In the yard Patsy's spirits grew lighter. From the ground to the roof of the stables pigeons were busily coming and going. He stood in rapt contemplation while his father, entering the stable, called out :

"Are you there, Mike?"

Although gazing steadily towards the hayloft, the sudden change from the glare of daylight to the

dimness of the stable prevented him seeing Mike's frightened face peering down and as quickly disappearing. Hearing the stirring in the straw overhead, Mr. Flanagan called out several times. There was a fit of hollow coughing above, after which Mike, with long straws sticking about his clothes, came slowly down the ladder. When he arrived on the floor Mr. Flanagan gazed pityingly at him.

"Why, Mike, asthore," said he, kindly, "this isn't you, is it?"

"Ay then, it is, Misther Flanagan," said Mike, hoarsely. "What is it you want? Iv it's anythin'," he looked furtively towards the door, "about Constible Kerrigan, he's on the wrong thrack, an' so I'll prove before me God!"

"Why, Mike, is yir mind asthray, or what's the matter at all, at all? Shure you ought to see a doctor, achushla. I only come to see Sur Harbit on a matter iv bisniss——"

The deep sigh of relief which Mike gave stopped Mr. Flanagan's further utterance. Stepping back, Mike straightened his shoulders, then he stretched out his arms like a man after sleep.

"Shure, it's all a bad dhrame," said he, "thanks be to God! That loft up there'll be the death iv me betwane the cowld wind an' bad dhrames. Yis, iv coorse, why not? Shure you can see the mather. Why, there's Miss Essie herself. I'll tell her."

He was out of the stable, across the yard, before Mr. Flanagan emerged.

Miss O'Hara had come to the back door. She was standing on the step, dressed in black, with a little muslin apron into which she had thrust her hands as, with sympathetic smile, she studied Patsy's enthusiasm

over the pigeons. When Mike, having touched his forehead, delivered his message, she looked across at Mr. Flanagan, who appeared absorbed in contemplation of his son. She came down the steps.

"Mr. Flanagan," said she.

Instantly turning, Mr. Flanagan, with a look of astonishment, as if she was the last person he expected to see, took off his hat, keeping it swinging to and fro like a pendulum in both hands.

"You wish to see my father, Mr. Flanagan?"

Before answering he put the tip of his hat to his chin as he gazed down with a ruminating air at the ground.

"Well, miss, you see, it is perhaps as well that I might say at wanst, I do wish to see Sur Harbit iv convenient. But, miss," he continued, as she turned quickly towards the door, "wid all due respect to you, miss, an' to Sur Harbit, I'm not in the laste taste iv a hurry. Far be it from me, miss, to intrude meself either upon you, miss, or yir rispicted father. Patsy!"

Patsy had turned his back on the pigeons to stare open-mouthed at the young lady.

"Patsy," exclaimed Mr. Flanagan, with sudden severity, "how dar you kape on yir cap in the prisince iv a lady? Where's yir manners? Take off yir cap, sur, this minit, or I'll give you a whack on the jaw y'll rimimber to yir dyin' day. Iv it is not convenient, miss," he added, respectfully, "any time widin six months 'll do me."

"I shall tell father at once," returned Essie. "He's not up yet. In fact, he's not very well to-day; but I'm sure he will see you."

Mr. Flanagan was about to protest again, but she was gone in an instant. Mike was sweeping before the stable door. Having looked thoughtfully into his hat

for some moments, Mr. Flanagan lifted his eyes slowly until they rested on Patsy.

"Don't you forgit yir manners, me boy," said he, gently, "in the prisince iv a lady. It's nayther good manners or good braydin' to kape on hat or cap whin a lady's ayther talkin' to you or standin' nigh you."

Essie shortly returned. Mr. Flanagan was again so lost in alien contemplation that she had to call him. He started at the sound of her voice.

"Will you come upstairs, Mr. Flanagan?" said she. "Father will see you in a moment."

"I'm afraid it's onconvenient, perhaps, miss," he suggested, as he followed her.

She looked back with a smile.

"Not in the least, Mr. Flanagan."

She led the way into the house. Before entering, he turned on the steps to call out in a mournful voice:

"Patsy! You rimimber what I tould you?"

"What, daddy?" cried Patsy.

"Don't you forgit it now, an' stay there till I come out."

Having delivered these words, like the last speech of a man about to be executed, Mr. Flanagan turned into the passage, where he stumbled against Mrs. Grogarty, who was on her way to the coalhole.

"I beg pardin!" he exclaimed. "Shure I didn't see a bit iv you, ma'am."

Mrs. Grogarty grinned angrily at him, displaying a mouth with only two or three teeth, then, without a word, went on towards the dark passage under the stairs.

Meanwhile Essie waited on the landing above. When Mr. Flanagan joined her, she pushed open the door on her right, saying:

"Father will be down in a moment."

He hesitated on the threshold.

"But, miss, I'm raly an' thruly afraid that Sur Harbit's not well enough to see me. I'd much rather put off this matther now that I think iv it, since Sur Harbit's not in good health. Iv it's all the same to you an' Sur Harbit, miss, I think it 'ud be bettther iv I called some other day."

She thrust the door open wider.

"Oh, but father expects you now. Do come in, Mr. Flanagan."

With a deep sigh of resignation he entered, while Essie pulled down the blinds to exclude the glare which, she explained, hurt her father's eyes. When she was gone Mr. Flanagan, seating himself on the edge of a chair, nursed his hat on his knee. Although the day was warm he felt cold. The minutes passed like hours. Then there was a footstep on the landing. He stood quickly up.

CHAPTER IX

A RISE IN CONSOLS

L EARNING on a stick, Sir Herbert O'Hara came slowly in towards the arm-chair beside the fireplace.

"Ah, Mr. Flanagan," he observed, waving a thin hand as he passed, "my daughter told me you were here. I am very glad to see you."

"That's a kind wurrud, Sir Harbit," said Mr. Flanagan, heartily. "I'm ibliged to you, sur. I thank you, Sur Harbit, I'm as well as can be ixpixed, thanks be to God! An' I hope I see you well, sur?"

Pausing with a hand on the arm-chair, Sir Herbert turned, before he sat down.

"Do I look well, Mr. Flanagan?" he asked, in a melancholy voice.

Mr. Flanagan gazed with sudden fixity at him until it occurred to him that he was wanting in good manners, when he transferred his gaze to the drawn blind.

"Well, sur, iv coorse, I don't want t' make out, an' it would be not goin' the right way about sayin' things, iv I said you luk as well as I wish you wor. But, iv coorse, at the same time, sur," he explained in fear of hurting the other's feelings, "people, sur, ladies an'

gintlemin, in your station iv life, iv coorse, they nivir luk iv one may say, in what you call rude health. Rude health," he repeated, gazing at the ceiling as if he had made a discovery. "Ladies an' gintlemin are nivir in rude health."

Letting himself down gently in his chair, Sir Herbert waved a hand again before bending forward to take up the poker.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Flanagan," said he.

At first Mr. Flanagan sat down stiffly ; then, becoming conscious of his awkwardness, nursed his chin, his elbow on his knee. This attitude, in turn, struck him as a trifle too familiar. Picking his hat from the floor he began to weigh it between his knees. Sir Herbert, as he stopped to poke the fire, turned his face.

"Mr. Flanagan," said he, "I shall be perfectly candid with you——"

Ceasing for a moment to weigh the hat, Mr. Flanagan assumed an expression of profound, even anxious attention.

"Sur, to you."

Sir Herbert, having given the fire a final poke, leaned languidly back.

"I shall be perfectly candid with you. I am not well, Mr. Flanagan——"

"No, sur," said Mr. Flanagan, with deepest sympathy. "Well, sur, it's sorry I am to hear that. Iv a man hasn't his health, what's the use iv him bein' alive at all, at all ?"

Sir Herbert sadly moved his head up and down.

"Far from well," said he. "Even now I have risen from a sick-bed when I should perhaps have remained there. But hearing that you wished to see me, I got up and came down as you see."

Rising, Mr. Flanagan remained in front of his chair.

"Sur Harbit, undher them sarcumstances, I can only say this, that I'm sorry you tuk the thrubble to git up out iv a sick-bed. I'm inthrudin', sur, upon you. I'll take me lave, wid your permission, till a more convanient saisin."

Leaning on the elbow that rested on the arm of the chair, Sir Herbert turned his eyes to the visitor.

"Mr. Flanagan, your sentiments are an honour to you; but I assure you there is no reason why you should go without stating your business. Though I am weak and ill it is not less my duty to attend to business. Pray be seated."

After an irresolute moment, during which Mr. Flanagan having taken out the account, returned it to his pocket, he sat down again.

"My illness," said Sir Herbert, "is the result, I fear, of the worry and trouble attendant on my altered circumstances. You know, Mr. Flanagan—all the world knows—of the terrible reverse of fortune which it has pleased Providence to lay upon me. I, the largest landowner in the county, master of the county foxhounds—what am I now? What," he repeated, mournfully, dropping his brows on his hand, "am I now?"

Remorsefully gazing at the thin, bowed figure in the arm-chair, Mr. Flanagan despised himself for coming to worry a man already so broken with cares.

"Shure, Sur Harbit," said he, softly, "there's no wan knows betther nor meself that there nivir was a more open-hearted gintleman whin you had the money. All the county knows that. All the quality, sur, know it, for there nivir was a house where ivrything was done in the grandest style an' ivry one med welcome as the flowers iv May."

Sir Herbert passed the back of his hand across his eyes.

"Ah, Flanagan, Flanagan!" said he.

Then he sighed deeply, sinking back in the chair with his face turned away.

"Plase God, sur, y'll have yir own in coorse iv time. It's a long road that's no turnin'."

"It is kind and generous of you to say so, Mr. Flanagan. I appreciate your sympathy, and I thank you."

During the pause that ensued Mr. Flanagan was disturbed in mind between his duty to his business and sympathy for the unfortunate gentleman before him. Three times he rose to depart, unnoticed by Sir Herbert, but as often he irresolutely resumed his seat. At length, having cleared his throat—in a noisy manner, despite his attempts at self-control—he rose again.

"Sur Harbit, by yir lave, sur, I think I'll be goin'. It's ivident to me that you are too sick now to attind to bisniss. Ah, shure, it can wait long enough. Iv it wasn't for Mrs. Flanagan hirsilf, the divil a fut I'd have set inside this house."

Rising slowly, Sir Herbert placed his back to the fire while he listened with bent head.

"Mr. Flanagan," said he, looking up, "I am certainly far from robust. My nerves are shattered. There was a time I could follow the hounds from dawn to dark. Now I am a wreck. My appetite is gone. A crust of bread and a slice of vegetable marrow or cucumber—such is my daily repast. Your business, I presume, has reference to my little account with you."

"Well, sur, since you are so kind as to mintion it, I may say, widout batin' about the bush, it was an' is. But, at the same time, sur——"

"My dear Flanagan, it is true I am in low water, but I am not altogether destitute."

"God forbid, sur !"

Sir Herbert shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh no, not entirely destitute. I am merely waiting for a rise in consols and a few mining shares to sell out and settle all these little debts. In a few days—perhaps to-morrow, perhaps not for a month—you can never tell how the money market will go."

"Iv coorse not, sur. Any time that suits you, sur ; it's all the same to me. Yir wurrud, sur, is as good as the Bank. Mrs. Flanagan, sur, her mind's always unaisy about things, an' just to plase her I said I'd call."

"Quite right, Flanagan, perfectly right. Business is business."

"There y'are, sur. An' shure, why not ? I may tell her it'll be all right, sur, in due coorse ?"

"Most assuredly ! If there is one little account more than another I am desirous of clearing off, Mr. Flanagan, it is yours ; and I apologise for having allowed it to run so far."

"Indade, an' yor heartily welkim, sur, to anythin' we have ! As I've of'en said to Mrs. Flanagan, it's an honour to the shop, sur. My rispicks to you, Sur Harbit, sur, an' I hope you'll soon be in bettther health."

Sir Herbert followed him to the door.

"Thank you, thank you. I hope so too. I trust your family are all well ?"

"Thanks be to God, they're in the bist iv health. Good-day, sur, an' good luk !"

At the door Sir Herbert extended his thin hand, which Mr. Flanagan shook so heartily that he brought tears into Sir Herbert's weak eyes.

Outside, in the yard, Patsy was seated on the stone basin of the pump, contemplating the pigeons with a tired air. His father silently beckoned to him with a forefinger. Patsy followed.

When they were outside the gate Mr. Flanagan closed it with the utmost carefulness, after which he stood looking vacantly up and down the road while Patsy gazed at him in wonder.

"Won't you come home now, daddy?"

Mr. Flanagan first looked at his arms, then twisted round the tail of his coat.

"Is there any dirt on me clothes, Patsy?"

Patsy, with observant eyes, walked round his father.

"No, there isn't, then."

"Then, avic, come on," said his father, gloomily, "in the name iv God."

When they had gone a few paces Mr. Flanagan stopped, thrusting his hands into his pockets.

"Well, now, what will I do at all at all!" he exclaimed.

"What did you forgit, daddy?" asked Patsy, anxiously.

Mr. Flanagan gazed solemnly in silence at him for a moment. Then he sighed deeply.

"Patsy," said he, "I forgot me pipe."

"But, shure, we're nearly home now," observed Patsy.

"Ay, ay," muttered his father, "home, shure enough. Well, God be praised, it's not me fault. Shure it's a wake man I am, afther all's said an' done. An' the wakest always goes to the wall. Patsy, asthore, whin you grow up to be a man—— Are you listenin'?"

Rubbing his fist into his right eye, Patsy whimpered:

"Yis, daddy."

"Whin you grow up to be a man," said his father, sadly, "be a man, Patsy; don't be an omadhaun like yir poor ould father."

Adoring his father with all the fervour of his young soul, Patsy had been miserably impressed by his sad air from the moment he reappeared in the yard of the Red House. Now his words acted as a climax. The little boy began to cry.

"Why, what in the wurruld's the matther wid you?" exclaimed his father. "Was the pijins not to yir likin', Patsy?"

As Patsy made no response, but continued whimpering, his father had an inspired thought.

"Is it hungry y'are, me boy?"

"No, daddy."

"Then what's the matther? Have you a pain anywhere?"

"No."

"Well, well, don't let yir mother see that you wor cryin' or you'll nivir hear the ind iv it. An' now, Patsy, we're in sight iv home, an' I want you to do me a good turn. Are you listenin'?"

Patsy looked up with muddy eyes. His father had halted at that part of the road where the back lane began.

"I'll go round be the lane," observed Mr. Flanagan, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder, "bekase I want you to go upstairs an' fetch me me pipe an' tibacca an' matches out iv me ould throusters that you'll find on me bed. An' I want you to do this, now, widout lettin' yir mother know. D'you mind?"

Patsy nodded.

"Now, you'll find me at the back in the lane at the other ind, an' bring thim to me there."

"Yis, daddy."

Patsy prepared to start.

"An' above all," his father called after him ; " above all, in the name iv God, don't let yir mother know where I am."

When Patsy hurried away, Mr. Flanagan, with bent head, his hands behind him, slowly paced down the lane. Passing his house he stooped low, lest Mrs. Flanagan should be in the back windows. Patsy soon appeared with pipe and tobacco, when his father, presenting him with a penny, solemnly took his leave.

"Go home now, me boy, an' larn yir tasks for to-morra, bekase yiv had no schoolin' to-day. An' whativir yir mother says be guided by, for she manes well. I won't be home meself till late, as I may drop in for a chat wid Misther Gilligan."

Lifting Patsy up, he kissed him, and they parted.

CHAPTER X

SIR HERBERT DROPS IN

NEXT evening, Mr. Flanagan not having returned, Mrs. Flanagan put on her bonnet and shawl. Taking Patsy by the hand, she went down the street until they arrived at Jerry Molloy's public-house. Patsy at her heels, she walked in without looking to right or left. She paused in front of the wooden compartment at the end of the counter. Here, alone, puffing his pipe, with a can of porter before him, sat Mr. Flanagan. His wife looked steadily at him, but said never a word. Mr. Flanagan's ruddy face grew pale. He rose.

"Ay, Margit," said he, "I was just thinkin' iv goin' back. I tuk ill here last night, an' didn't like to disturb you. Is that you, Patsy? I'm ready now, Margit."

He bade a sheepish good-day to his friend Jerry behind the counter, while his wife, holding Patsy's hand, followed a few paces behind.

It was the length of the hilly street from Jerry Molloy's public-house to Mr. Flanagan's shop. On that quiet evening at the doors and windows many looked out at the little procession. Mr. Flanagan bore this publicity heroically; but when Constable Kerrigan, starting unexpectedly from the corner of Chapel Lane, walked step for step half a pace behind him, Mr.

Flanagan grew annoyed. Three times he turned to stare at Kerrigan, who returned the glance with one doubly menacing.

The curious began to gather. A few paces from his own door Mr. Flanagan faced round. The crowd hurried up. Constable Kerrigan halted.

"D'you want me?" asked Mr. Flanagan, in a loud voice.

"Go on, now, about yir bisniss," said Constable Kerrigan, sternly. "Go home, now, an' don't be creatin' a disturbinse in the public strate."

Mr. Flanagan's face suddenly flushed.

"Have you any crime agin me?" he exclaimed, loudly. "Bekase iv you have, arrist me!"

Constable Kerrigan jerked his thumb towards the shop.

"You'd better go home, now," said he; "yir collectin' a crowd now, an' I'll have to put a stop to it."

Mr. Flanagan stepped back nearer but Kerrigan did not move.

"I'll tell you what," said Mr. Flanagan,—“iv you want to shadda me, me man, you'll have to show yir warrant. I'll go to the barracks to-morra, an' have an explination about you.”

He glanced round at the crowd, who expressed approval in modified murmurs. Constable Kerrigan became angry.

"Are you goin' into yir house, or are you not?" he exclaimed. "Bekase iv you don't I'll put me hand on you, an iv I put me hand on you you'll rigrit it to yir dyin' day."

Another hand was put on Mr. Flanagan. It was that of Mrs. Flanagan, who, catching at her husband's coat-tails, turned him fairly round.

"Come in out iv that," she cried, "an' don't be makin' yirself a laughin' stock to the whole town, standin' there bandyin' wurruds wid the polis!"

"Oh, daddy, daddy!" exclaimed Patsy, in a burst of tears, "come in, or y'll be tuk up!"

Taking the boy by the hand Mr. Flanagan walked into the shop. Mrs. Flanagan following, shut the door violently in the face of the constable.

Passing into the parlour Mr. Flanagan sat down, lifting Patsy, who was still sobbing, to his knee. He had taken a chair with its back to the long table, remaining motionless, with one arm round Patsy, his other hand gripping his knee, as he stared fixedly at the little bundle of ornamental papers in the grate. Mrs. Flanagan was not long arriving. The moment she sat down, near the window—having first drawn down the blind as if there was a death in the house—she began to rock herself, beating her palms on her knees.

"Oh wurra's the day an' wurra's the day!" she exclaimed, without a glance at her husband. "It was always to come to me, an' I knew it from the first day I set eyes on him. Not contint wid this that an' the other, but to dhrag a crowd iv idle ruffians at me heels an' the heels iv me innicint child, in the face iv ivry rispectable, dacent, honest man an' woman in the town. I don't know what I've done to be disgraced an' persicuted afther a life iv toil an' moil, wearin' me skin to the bone, scrubbin' and rubbin' on me knees from morn, noon to night, to kape a roof over thim an' a bit in their mouths! An' this is me reward!"

Patsy, having raised his head to stare at the distracted figure of his mother, began to sob afresh while his father pressed him silently to his breast. There was

a deathlike silence in the room, during which Mrs. Flanagan caught her breath.

"An' to go away," she burst out again, "in the mornin' wid his best clothes on to fetch the money that's bin due these months an' months——" Mr. Flanagan involuntarily tightened his grip on Patsy. "Whin I thought an' said to meself," she continued, "that now he's goin' to take some intherest in the house an' get his lawful debts. An' to think he should get the money an' put it in his pockit an' go off wid himsilf to dhrink it an' smoke it an' gamble it wid nivr a thought iv his helpless child or the mother that broke her heart to bear an' rear it."

Setting down Patsy, but holding him standing between his knees, Mr. Flanagan turned to look solemnly at his wife.

"Margit," said he.

"To spind it an' ind it!" exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan, appealing with uplifted hands and eyes to the smoked ceiling. "The money that was to help to pay the rint an' get the child his clothes!"

"Margit," observed Mr. Flanagan.

"Oh wurra's the day an' wurra's the day!"

Mrs. Flanagan beat her knees softly again. Mr. Flanagan, facing round a little more, cleared his throat.

"Margit," said he, "I got no money."

Mrs. Flanagan's mouth remained open as she sat back. For the first time since they had entered she gazed straight at her husband. Not knowing exactly what rejoinder to make, after her first shock of surprise, she began slowly to undo her bonnet-strings, still looking at her husband. He, turning round further to face her the better, pulling Patsy with him, rested

his heavy right fist on the table, pressing his lips firmly as he returned his wife's astonished gaze with one of apologetic candour.

"Margit," said he, "since I saw you last I haven't touched or handled a pinny iv Sur Harbit's money. Patsy, avic, kape still, for I have to talk fair an' square wid yir mother, as honesty's the bist policy. Margit, I wint straight to Sur Harbit's, an' he got out iv a sick-bed to see me, an' I tuk that as a compliment, an acknowledgemint that he was ready an' willin' to pay his debt. He spoke fair and square to me as a gintleman should, an'—— Patsy, you'd bettther go out an' play, I think, iv you can't kape quiet. What Sur Harbit said was this—that as regards prisint money he had none at hand, but he was ixpictin' a rise in consils an' vegetable marras which might come to-day or to-morra or the day afther, for there's no tellin' how the money markit may go up or go down accordin' to sarcumstances. Be quiet, Patsy! But the momint there kim a rise in consils an' vegetable marras he'd sell out an' put the whole lock, stock, an' barrel up to auction, an' the first persin he'd sind a cheque to would be yirself." Striking his hand firmly on the table, he added, "I've tould you now, Margit, all I've got to say, an' whativir you may do I know'll be for the bist. I have done what I cud do, an' no man can do more, an' as God's me judge, I've tould you ivry wurrud iv truth, the whole truth an' nothin' but the truth!"

When he had finished, the set face with which she had listened began to work; her fingers twitched at her dress. Mr. Flanagan, tightening his grasp on Patsy, resigned himself to the expected outburst, when there was a knock at the door. He started to answer the summons. Sir Herbert O'Hara stood

before him. Mr. Flanagan for a moment could only gasp at this unexpected sight. Then, turning his head, he ejaculated :

"Margit, Sur Harbit."

Thrusting her husband abruptly aside, Mrs. Flanagan flung the door wide.

"Sur Harbit !" she exclaimed. "Shure it's not yirself I see standin' there forninst me ? Come in, sur. This is an honour to be shure ! Won't you step in, Sur Harbit ? Patsy, a chair for Sur Harbit ! Come in, Sur Harbit, an' welcome !"

With his back to the wall, against which he had been unceremoniously thrust, Mr. Flanagan saw Sir Herbert walk slowly in, while Mrs. Flanagan, briskly rubbing one hand over the other, smiled as she dropped repeated curtsies.

"Mrs. Flanagan," observed Sir Herbert, "I am very happy to see you. I have been out of town all day, and I am far from well."

"Plase God, you'll soon be sthrong an' hearty, sur," suggested Mrs. Flanagan, with another curtsey which he acknowledged by a grave inclination of the head.

"And I thought," he continued, "as I was passing your hospitable door that I would just drop in and rest a bit. For I assure you, my dear Mrs. Flanagan, I am excessively fatigued."

"Patsy, is it sittin' down y'are in prisince iv Sur Harbit !" exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan, turning towards her son, who dived to the other side of the table. "Here, Sur Harbit's a chair iv you'll condiscind to sate yirself, sur, an' shure it's an honour. But maybe the chair's too hard. Pathrick !" to her husband, "don't be gaumin' there wid yir mouth open. Go in an' fetch the bist chair for Sur Harbit."

"No, no," said Sir Herbert, "this is good enough for me. Recollect I am not now accustomed to lounge in velvet cushions. No need to tell you that! No need to tell you that!"

He sat down, bending forward to gaze gloomily into the grate. Mrs. Flanagan, standing beside him, sighed sympathetically.

"Ah, Sur Harbit," said she, "shure, it's all for the bist. None iv us, sur, can tell the ways iv Providinse. Shure you'll come to yir own in time, plase God."

"Perhaps so, perhaps so," he returned. "It is kind and good of you to say so. Thank you!"

Mr. Flanagan, looking very red, struggled through the doorway with the best chair which, after a wild hunt over the house, he had found in his wife's bedroom. Taking it from his hot hands, Mrs. Flanagan vigorously dusted it, then pushed it towards the visitor.

"Wud you be plased, sur," said she, "to take this? You'll find it aisier afther yir long walk."

Starting as if from reverie, Sir Herbert glanced from her to the chair.

"Ah, thank you—thank you," said he, rising. "I am really afraid I am giving you a great deal of trouble."

Mrs. Flanagan gave a genial laugh.

"Thrubble, is it?" said she. "Thrubble, indade! Now, Sur Harbit," she added, in a low voice, as she bent towards him, "won't you take a dhrop iv somethin', sur, iv you don't think it too presoomin' in me to offer it to the likes iv you? A dhrop iv the bist, now, sur? Do!"

"My dear Mrs. Flanagan, you are positively too kind. Well, since you do press me, thank you very much."

Mrs. Flanagan turned so suddenly to her husband that he stepped back in alarm.

"Pathrick," she exclaimed, "go into the shop an' bring a decanther iv the very bist. Mind, now, the bist! An' I'll go meself an' get Sur Harbit a clane glass."

When the decanter was brought in she arranged a tray close to Sir Herbert's elbow.

"Mebbe it's a tumbler iv punch you'd like, sur," said she, coaxingly; "bekase iv so——"

He looked from her to the decanter and glasses.

"Mrs. Flanagan," said he, "this is extremely hospitable. I thank you. A small glass of whiskey and water will be sufficient, I assure you. But I could not think of touching it unless your good man and yourself would do me the honour of taking a glass with me."

Mrs. Flanagan rubbed her hands excitedly, the palm of one on the back of the other.

"Oh, now, Sur Harbit, raly! Too much honour. Raly, Sur Harbit, I cudn't think iv the like. As for Mither Flanagan, he'd be betther engaged fadin' the pigs that he left to the care iv thim that toil an' moil while he's here an' there an' everywhere, skinaderin' about."

Taking Patsy by the hand Mr. Flanagan left, making meditatively for the kitchen. Here for some time he sat smoking on one side of the fireplace. Having supped off a large slice of bread and butter, Patsy, on the opposite side, began to show signs of sleep. He watched his father smoking until his eyes gradually closed, his head sunk by degrees until his chin striking his breast roused him to momentary consciousness, after which he relapsed again. Mr. Flanagan, becoming aware of the boy's condition, put aside his pipe. Taking Patsy in his arms, he brought him upstairs to bed, where he soon fell asleep.

When Mr. Flanagan came downstairs it was after midnight. He found his wife in the kitchen. He stood slowly rubbing his chin as he gazed hesitatingly at her.

"The man must go home," exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan, "iv you have to carry him. Home he must go. This is no open house for dhrunkards!"

Mr. Flanagan went in to the parlour. Sir Herbert was sunk deep in the chair, his arms hanging down. Approaching softly, Mr. Flanagan touched him on the near shoulder, but without effect. He shook him a little, but Sir Herbert showed no sign of consciousness. Mr. Flanagan was staring about, considering what he should do next, when the entry of his wife nerved him to further exertion. Taking Sir Herbert by both shoulders he lifted him from the chair, shook him in the air, then let him slip back again. Sir Herbert opened his eyes sleepily.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Mr. Flanagan bent over him.

"Sur Harbit," said he, in respectful undertone, "don't you think it's time, sur, you wor gettin' home?"

Sir Herbert settled down again in his chair.

"I won't go home!" said he.

"Sur Harbit, dear," said Mrs. Flanagan, coaxingly. "Sur Harbit, dear, get up like a good gentleman an' go home. Me husbind 'll see you safe!"

Extending his hand Sir Herbert shook hers.

"Mrs. Flanagan," said he, "I'm extremely obliged to you. Your husband's extremely impert'nent."

"It's gettin' very late, sur," observed Mrs. Flanagan.

"You're most impert'nent, sir," said Sir Herbert to Mr. Flanagan, "most impert'nent. I shall deal with

you, sir, at Quarter Sessions. You forget I'm magistrate. Mrs. Flanagan, I'm magistrate."

"Y'are, indade, sur," assented Mrs. Flanagan.

"Very well," said Sir Herbert. "I shall have your husband before me for impert'nence. You may go down, sir."

Retiring to the back of the room Mrs. Flanagan held a whispered consultation with her husband. They decided to enlist the services of Mr. Clarence Maguire.

Mr. Flanagan therefore went upstairs to the young schoolmaster, who, after some hours of study, was asleep in bed. He rose cheerfully, however, and presently both men came down. After some persuasion Sir Herbert consented to go home in the company of Clarence with whom he set out, while Mr. Flanagan followed a respectful distance along the deserted street.

Nearing the Red House, Clarence observed a light in the hall. Having no desire to witness Miss O'Hara's discomfiture, he endeavoured to persuade Sir Herbert to enter alone, but Sir Herbert, gripping him by the arm, insisted on his company into the house.

Finally, when his companion declared his intention to sit on the grass until morning, Clarence assisted him up the steps. Before they could knock the door was opened. Clarence Maguire never forgot the white, scared face that appeared in the doorway. Essie had a black shawl about her head. Her eyes were hot with unshed tears as she helped her father into the hall where he sat down. When she turned back to the door where Clarence irresolutely stood, she held out her hand. He saw her lips tremble.

"Thank you, very much," said she. "Father," she added, hesitatingly, "has not been very well of late."

"He'll be all right soon," stammered Clarence. "I—I know he is delicate."

"Has he gone?" exclaimed Sir Herbert, suddenly, from the hall.

Essie turned her head.

"Who, father?"

"That son of a peasant," answered Sir Herbert.

"Oh, father!" gasped Essie.

She turned to the door, but Clarence had gone. She looked out. He was half-way down the path already where he was joined by Mr. Flanagan, who had been discreetly lurking behind a tree.

CHAPTER XI

THE HAUNTED BOG

FOR several days Sir Herbert remained indoors. One afternoon he looked so ill that Essie urged him to take a walk. She helped him on with his overcoat, tied a muffler round his throat, then stood on tiptoe to be kissed. Once out, with the open land on either side, he walked briskly. The few people he met respectfully saluted him. He struck across the fields towards the bog. After some heavy walking on the shaking ground he saw in the distance what seemed a large mound of turf, but which gradually assumed the appearance of a mud cabin. Coming nearer he observed beside the door a dung-heap surrounded with stagnant water where several ducks disported. A pig grunted with its nose thrust through the gate of its sty close beside the cabin. Before the door, leaning on a pitchfork, stood the old peasant, Peter Maguire. Shading his eyes with his hand, he had been watching the tall figure coming across the bog.

"Well, Maguire," began Sir Herbert, as he approached
"hard at work?"

"God save yir honor!"

Sir Herbert looked about.

"You keep your little place very tidy, Maguire!"

He looked into the cabin, the old man stepping respectfully aside.

"Aha, very good," observed Sir Herbert; "humble but clean."

"Wud yir honor be plased to stip inside?"

"Not to-day, thank you. What a lonely place this is!"

Leaning on his pitchfork the old peasant slowly shook his head up and down.

"There's plinty iv them about me sometimes. But shure, what does an ould crature like me want wid thim? Iv they'd only let me alone in pace!"

He made the sign of the cross.

Sir Herbert, who had been peering over the pigsty, paid little attention to these remarks, which the old man, however, delivered with solemn anxiety, looking up to the sky when he had spoken. Feeling the air chill Sir Herbert tightened the muffler about his throat thrusting the ends into his bosom.

"By the way, Maguire——"

The old man touched his forehead.

"Yir honour's sarvint."

"Have you such a thing as a mouthful of whiskey on your place? It's growing confoundedly cold."

"Iv yir honour 'll come inside an' take a sate."

Sir Herbert went into the cabin after old Maguire, who placed a plain wooden chair—the only one—in front of the little heap of smouldering turf which served as a fire. Then disappearing into the gloom of a far corner the old man, after some struggling and hard breathing, brought forth a small, black bottle and a cracked cup. Sir Herbert having drank, glanced at his host standing a respectful pace away.

"Does your grandson visit you often?"

Maguire slowly scratched his head before replying.

"Me gran'son, is it?"

"Mr. What's-his-name — the schoolmaster. He's your grandson, is he not?"

"Well, there y'are, you see. Ay, indade. The schoolmaster. Troth, an' he doesn't come as often as he used. He's gettin' tired iv the place, I suppose."

"He seems a very intelligent and respectable young man."

"He was born," said the old peasant slowly, "over there."

He pointed to the corner where an old wooden settle-bed rested against the mud wall.

"What I mane is," explained the old man, hastily, "his mother gev birth to her son in that very bed. The schoolmaster, is it? Ay, indade. Well, well."

"He's in more comfortable quarters now; not rolling in wealth, of course, but better anyhow than this."

"He cud rowl on goold iv he had the mind."

Sir Herbert glanced quickly up.

"How so?" he asked.

Maguire shook his head solemnly up and down.

"There's ne'er a born man," said he, "in this town-land cud rowl in goold an' silver like the schoolmaster, as you call him, yir honor. Ay, troth. Whist! I don't mane to say a wurrud agin him."

Leaving his visitor to reflect over these mysterious words, the old man lit a candle, which he stuck with its own grease against the wall.

"Do you mean, Maguire," asked Sir Herbert, slowly, "that the schoolmaster inherits money from his dead parents?"

"Axin' yir honor's pardin. An' I won't say a wurrud

agin him. But, plase God, I'll nivir touch a farden iv his, not iv it 'ud save me from the grave."

Sir Herbert handed back the bottle and cup.

"You mean," he urged, "that your grandson is a rich man, and yet drudges at teaching in a National School?"

"Yir honor," said the old peasant, with a cunning contraction of the eyes, "if it plases him to tache young childer, it's not for money he does it. God help thim! Yir honor, I say no more. I wudn't take a farden iv his to save me life."

Sir Herbert rose.

"Supposing," said he, "I asked this young man for the loan of a hundred pounds, could he give it to me?"

"He cud give you that an' as many more at the back iv it iv he had the mind. I won't say any more, axin' yir honor's pardin."

The old man, still muttering, returned to the dark corner to replace the bottle. When Sir Herbert glanced from the door he saw that the air had grown misty. He shook himself.

"I must be getting back, Maguire. God bless me," he added, looking out from the doorway again, "there's a regular fog."

"It comes out iv the bog," said the old man, who was standing beside him—"out iv the bog it comes, an' gets thicker an' thicker. Them that makes it knows that betther nor me. I'll see yir honor safe wid the lantern."

Taking the candle from the blackened wall he thrust it into an old lantern, then went on in advance. Sir Herbert following, dimly saw him a few paces ahead. The mist was like blue smoke deepening into a white fog in the distance.

"Kape close to me, yir honor," shouted Maguire.

The mist chilled Sir Herbert, getting into his eyes and hair. His clothes were quickly saturated. Carefully testing the shaking ground with his foot at every step, he stumbled after his guide, who, with extended arm, kept the lantern swinging.

"At the full moon," shouted the old peasant, suddenly turning back.

Sir Herbert blew the mist from his face.

"What do you say, Maguire?"

"Yill find him, yir honor, hidin' goold in the fairy circle."

Sir Herbert halted till the old peasant, bent and panting, arrived.

"What are you talking about, my man?"

Old Maguire, looking fearfully about, worked his mouth without speaking.

"The schoolmaster. Any time yir honor wishes. Be the full moon."

He went on again without further remark. On the outskirts of the bog the mist became rarer, finally giving place to the clear evening light over the fields. Here Sir Herbert bade goodbye to the old peasant, who watched him for some moments crossing to the high-road. Then Maguire, turning, plunged back into the mist. As he went along he muttered aloud as if speaking to invisible beings.

"Iv the fog manes mischief, not to me, plase God. Yiz nadent crowd," he shouted, his steps more uncertain as he grew excited. "I nivir said a wurrud agin yiz. I cud have tould him the truth, but I wudn't say a wurrud agin yiz. Be that sign I place yiz at yir distance. Kape back from me, for I've no harrum in me heart agin yiz. Kape back from the poor ould man, an' let him ind his days in pace!"

When at last he came in sight of his cabin he made a sudden rush, as if to evade hands stretched to drag him back into the mist. Once inside, he shut the door, bolting it with excited rapidity. Then he laughed aloud.

"There!" he said, making the sign of the cross on the door; "an' there"—going on his knees to make the same sign on the threshold—"be the power iv that an' that I kape yiz in yir place. I have no harrum agin yiz in heart or sowl. Let me live me few days in pace—a poor, ould man!"

He sat down on a low stool, the lantern on the floor beside him. He lit a small, black clay pipe, his features working as he smoked until midnight, when, after prolonged prayers, he retired to sleep on a heap of sacks in the dark corner.

CHAPTER XII

AN IMPORTANT ARREST

MIKE RAFFERTY stood in the kitchen doorway, balancing himself with one hand against the doorpost while he wiped his brogues with a handful of straw. The young woman Biddy Magee, recently engaged for housework, was helping Mrs. Grogarty at the fire.

"Glory be to God, girl," said the old woman, "what are you dhramin' about? Luk at the sassages nearly on the floore!"

"Shure, she doesn't know what she's doin'," said Mike, entering. "It's admirin' me she is."

"I'd admire you," said Biddy, "wid a smack iv the saucepan across the face. I wudn't be seen dead wid you."

Mike thrust his hands aggressively into his pockets.

"Iv I had that head iv yours, Biddy, I'd let meself out for a broom be the month."

"Take yirself away out iv that," said Biddy, "before the luk iv you makes the milk turn sour."

"Arra, don't be makin' love to me," said Mike, seating himself on the table.

"Makin' love to you?" exclaimed Biddy, with a

short laugh. "Go home an' tell yir mother to poison you !"

"Bedad, iv I'd a face like yours," returned Mike, "I wudn't slape till I'd signed the plidge. Yir a shockin' advertisement for a public-house."

"Arra, don't mind him," said Mrs. Grogarty, as she stooped over the pan. "Shure, he's a good-for-nothin', idle vagabind. No dacent girl 'ud be seen talkin' to him."

"Indade, an' I don't want to talk to him," said Biddy, tossing her head. "It's hard up I'd be for conversation whin I'd bandy wurruds wid the likes iv him."

As she spoke Biddy carried a plate of sausages to the table. Mike gave her an affectionate squeeze. She instantly hit him on the head, knocking him off the table.

"The divil mend you !" exclaimed Mrs. Grogarty, over her shoulder ; "a dacent girl can't be in the house wid you."

"Arra, shure, it's only a bit iv fun," said Mike, apologetically.

"Well, kape yir fun to yirself," said Biddy. "Don't make so free till yir betther acquainted."

"That's a tarin' fine fist you have, anyway," observed Mike, sitting down to his dinner. "Shure, yid be a powerful hand at churnin' butthermilk."

"Don't mind him, girl," said Mrs. Grogarty. "Sit down an ate yir dinner."

"Won't you sit down, ma'am ?" asked Biddy, respectfully.

"Shure, I'll take a bit iv somethin'," said the old woman, "wid me tay by an' by."

Mike ate little. Biddy, however, helped herself with the heartiness of perfect health.

After a while her attention was distracted from her food by the mysterious conduct of Mike. He cautiously peered round to note that old Mrs. Grogarty was sitting at the fire, her back to the table, a cup of tea on her lap ; then noiselessly rising on his chair, he struck one of the bells above his head with a fork, slipping back into his seat again and bending closely over his plate. Rising, but holding tightly to the cup and saucer, Mrs. Grogarty gazed open-mouthed at the bell.

"That's the misthriss!" she exclaimed, glancing at Biddy. "Shure I thought all the time she was in the gardin. Wait a minit, I'll go up an' see what she wants."

Biddy was about to explain the imposture when Mike stopped her with a wink. The old woman, having laid her cup and saucer on the stool, hobbled away upstairs. As soon as she was gone, Mike, jumping from his chair, threw his arms tightly round Biddy's neck, forcing back her head to give her several resounding kisses. When he released her, he instantly ran for the back door. Biddy made after him with a broom, which she flung at him as he crossed the yard. Striking him on the back, he went down on his hands and knees. The next instant Biddy, to her amazement, beheld Constable Kerrigan—who had been for some time peering round the gate—rush in. Throwing himself on Mike before the latter could rise, he twisted him round and forced open his right hand.

"There it is!" shouted Kerrigan. "The white scar! Mike Rafferty, you're me prisoner."

Before he finished Biddy's strong hands flung him from the captive.

"D'you want to smother the boy?" she exclaimed. "What d'you mane at all, you cowardly spalpeen,

hittin' a man whin he's on the ground? Y'ought to be ashamed iv yirself."

"I've arristed him," said Kerrigan. "Go in an' mind yir own bisniss, an' lave me to mind mine."

"It's quare bisniss," exclaimed Biddy, "spyin' about on dacent people! Here, Mike"—affectionately to Mike, who had risen with white face—"go into the kitchen an' brush the dust off yir clothes. Mind me bisniss, indade!"

She pushed Mike before her, but flung the last words back over her shoulder. Constable Kerrigan, grasping at once the fact that his prey was being rescued, came after with quick steps. He placed his hand on Biddy's arm as they all entered the kitchen.

"Me young woman," said he, "there's no use in thryin' to ivade the law. I'm a constible, an' I mane to git an in the Foorce, an' that man's me prisiner."

Swiftly turning, Biddy struck him across the face with the back of her hand.

"Take yir hand off me!" she exclaimed. "How dar you? Yir young woman, indade! The cheek an' impirtnince iv you. D'you know who yir talkin' to?"

Mrs. Grogarty, having returned, instantly comprehended the state of affairs. Mike was standing in the recess beside the fireplace, his face like the whitewash on the wall, his terrified eyes wandering from Biddy to the constable. Kerrigan stood tenderly feeling the bridge of his nose, the blow having brought tears to his eyes.

"Sarve him right!" exclaimed Mrs. Grogarty. "That'll tache him to come snakin' round a dacent house!"

"Mike Rafferty!" said Kerrigan, "I've arristed you now and you can't iscape. Are you comin' wid me?"

Unable to articulate, Mike began to pant.

"Are you comin' wid me?" repeated Kerrigan. "Bekase iv not you know what to ixpict for attmpted rescue an' iscape. It'll add five years to you."

Mrs. Grogarty raised her withered hands.

"The Vargin presarve us!" she exclaimed; "did you ivir hear the like? Is there no livin' in the land wid the likes iv you?" addressing Kerrigan. "Can't you let the boy thry an' live quiet an' dacent whin he wants to? What are you arristin' him for?"

"He knows what he's arristed for," replied Kerrigan.

"I sware to you, ma'am," cried Mike, finding his voice with agony of desperation, "it was only whin I was a lad, as you might say, sivin years ago. That's all, as God's me judge."

Resting his face on his arm, which he placed against the wall, Mike began to cry.

"Aw, saints in glory, did you hear that?" exclaimed Mrs. Grogarty to Biddy. "He wants to take the poor boy for somethin' that happened years ago. There's law for you!"

"I must do me jooty," said Constable Kerrigan, "an' I mane to do it. I mane to git an in the Foorce."

Biddy advanced towards him.

"You'll git on ow a this," said she, "or I'll wring the neck iv you. Out you go now!"

Kerrigan retreated cautiously before her.

"Are you aware," said he, "that yir obsthrectin' the law?"

"Obsthrectin' yir gran'mother!" exclaimed Biddy. "What do I care for you or yir law? Out wid you now, an' don't show yir ugly face here agin, or it'll be worst for you. You'll make no arrists here!"

"We'll see about that!" exclaimed Kerrigan. "We'll see——"

"Go on now," cried Biddy. "Yir no man to be thyrin' to frighten a couple iv lone wimmin. Out wid you!"

She hustled him into the yard. As he turned to re-enter she shut the door in his face. Old Mrs. Grogarty at the same moment went over to stroke Mike's bowed head.

"God love you," said she, affectionately. "Sit down on the stool, achushla, an' don't fret. Shure, jewel, he was only wantin' to frighten you. Sit down an' don't be afeared. Biddy's beside you."

Wiping his eyes with the backs of his hands, Mike, after an uneasy glance at the closed door, sat down on the stool before the fire, Mrs. Grogarty standing beside him with her trembling hand resting on his shoulder. Biddy, when she had resolutely bolted the door, returned to the fireplace, where she stood sympathetically looking down at Mike.

"He's a dirty, mane polisman, that's what he is!" she observed.

The old woman, raising her hands and eyes, shook her head from side to side.

"Aw dear, aw dear," said she, "there's no pace in the wurruld at all wid the likes iv thim. Shure, they won't let any dacent people live. An' what, achushla, what is it he has agin you?"

"It was whin I was a bit iv a gosoon," said Mike, hysterically. "I—I was led away——"

The old woman patted his head.

"Don't cry, darlint," said she. "You wor led away! An' shure the bist in the wurruld 'ud be led away whin they're young. Don't cry!"

"They axed me to go wid thim," explained Mike, conquering a sob, "an' I wint wid them, an' the devil a

bit iv me knew what it was all about till I found meself out wid thim."

"Laws, just think iv that!" observed old Mrs. Grogarty, appealing to Biddy, who stood thoughtfully scratching her elbows. "Isn't it awful to lade a bit iv a lad away! An' what did they want wid you, avic?"

"Shure," said Mike, "they wor goin' to frighten some ould chap that had taken a place iv an ivicted tenant, though the divil a wan iv me knew what it was all about. An' then, whin the boys wor firin' into the house, an' I was set to watch, shure didn't the polis come, an' they wor all cotched but me."

"I've arristed you!" shouted Kerrigan through the keyhole. "Mind that now, Mike Rafferty!"

At this Mike, after a pitiful glance up at Mrs. Grogarty, began to cry again. Advancing rapidly to the door Biddy, opening it, flung a bucketful of dirty water into the yard; but Kerrigan, hearing the bolt withdrawn, had disappeared.

"He's gone, the mane spalpeen!" said Biddy, returning with an air of contempt.

"Och, he'll nab me yet!" said Mike, "an' I'll be put in jail!"

"The divil a jail you'll go to," said Mrs. Grogarty. "The masther's a magistrate," she added, "an' he won't see you put in jail for nothin'."

"Here's somewan comin' downstairs!" exclaimed Biddy, instantly busying herself at the table.

Mrs. Grogarty, seizing a poker, began to stir the fire. Mike, rising, wiped his eyes rapidly in his sleeves, and pretended to be tying his brogues. Miss O'Hara entered with a letter. When she appeared there was silence, save for the raking of the grate and the clattering of the plates as Biddy cleared the table.

"Oh, Mike," said Essie, brightly, "I just want you. Will you please post this? There's only five minutes left, and father wishes it be in time."

Mike looked at the letter, then at his grimy hands.

"Sartinly, miss," said he.

"Shure, there's Biddy 'll post it. She's quicker nor Mike," suggested Mrs. Grogarty, looking up, with the poker in her hand.

"Oh no, I want her upstairs," said Essie. "As soon as you are ready, Biddy."

"Yis, miss," said Biddy.

"Here, Mike—the letter," observed his mistress.

Mike rubbed his chin a moment.

"Wait, miss," said he, "till I get a bit iv paper to wrap it up in. Shure me hands are dirty."

"Hurry, hurry!" said Essie, impatiently.

When the bit of paper was found she ran upstairs. Mike stood looking at the letter, which he held out for inspection. Then he glanced from Biddy to the old woman.

"He's outside waitin' for me," he remarked, pathetically.

Biddy took the letter from him.

"Where's me shawl?" said she.

"There now," said Mrs. Grogarty to Mike, while Biddy wrapped the shawl about her head and shoulders.

"There's a fine, dacent, kind-hearted girl for you!"

"Arra, shure, I don't want him to be tuk be the polis," said Biddy. "Go upstairs somewhere," she said to Mike, "an' don't let that thafe iv the wurruld see you till I come back."

When she went out Mike concealed himself in the coal-hole under the stairs.

CHAPTER XIII

ON PAROLE

BIDDY went hurrying down the path to the gate. Kerrigan, who had been hiding behind a tree, stepped forth. When she saw him she cried out :

"I've no time to talk to you now. I must go an' post this letther for the misthriss."

"Hould on a minit, now," said Constable Kerrigan, trying to get into step with her. "Yir in a tarin' hurry. Mebbe you don't know I cud arrist you for attmpt at riscue? D'you know that?"

"Iv you don't let me alone an' let me do what I'm bid," said Biddy, "I'll give you what I gev you in the kitchen. Kape to yirself now."

"I mane to do me jooty," said Kerrigan, impressively, "an' to git an in the Foorce, an' I'm bound to tell you——"

She broke into a run. Halting, he thrust his thumbs into his belt, watching her doggedly until she was outside the gate. Dropping his chin on his chest he cogitated a few moments, then glanced hurriedly about, walked quickly a few paces to the gate, looked furtively round again, and stepped into the shadow of the largest tree near.

Within ten minutes Biddy returned. She had thrown

back the shawl from her face. She walked slowly, having lost breath during her run to the post-office. Kerrigan stepped from his hiding-place to meet her.

"I mane to spake to you," said he, "an' there's no use in thryin' to get out iv it."

"Arra, spake away till yir black in the face," returned Biddy. "I'm not bound to listen, anyhow."

This time Kerrigan found it an easy task to fall into step with her. He still had his thumbs in his belt.

"D'you know," said he, "that yiv placed yirself in the power iv the law?"

"The divil a hair I care," said Biddy.

"To riscue or attmpt to riscue a prisiner," said Kerrigan, "is a criminal iffense."

"Arra, go on wid you, man," said she. "Troth, you ought to be proud iv yirself thryin' to ruin a poor boy like Mike Rafferty. Shure that's a mane, dirty trick to be huntin' up ould scores. An' he a poor gosoon led away be a pack iv blaggards that ought to know betther. Shure I'm thinkin' yir not a man at all, at all, but a lump iv granite. Wor you nivir a boy yirself?"

"I was," replied Kerrigan.

Biddy looked pityingly at him.

"It must have bin a long time ago," said she, "an' I suppose you wor no betther nor worse than any other boy?"

"I suppose so," he assented, doubtfully.

"Ah then, shure," said Biddy, plaintively, "how wud you like people to come up an' say they wor goin' to get you into thrubble for what you did whin you wor a boy? Shure, there's no justice in that kind iv dirty wurruk!"

"I've me jooty now to perforim," said Kerrigan, sternly, "an' there's no use in talkin' to me like that.

The man has a raycord agin him, an' it's me jooty to see that he doesn't iscape. There's no use in thrivin' to privint me."

"Well, then, go in in God's name," said Biddy, angrily, "an' arrist him. But don't talk to me agin! I'd be ashamed to be seen talkin' to you afther such an act. Go an' arrist him."

She increased her pace, leaving him a little behind. While following, he pondered with knitted brows. He came up with her near the yard gate.

"Hould on a minit," said he.

She half turned to listen.

"I don't want," said he, speaking very slowly—"I don't want to use me power to do any man an injury, iv you luk at it in that light. Iv you giv me yir wurrud, now, that Mike Rafferty doesn't lave the counthry until I've thought over the matther, I'll see what can be done."

"Ah, shure, I knew you wor a dacent man afther all," said Biddy, enthusiastically. "Av coorse, constible, I'll give you me wurrud. An' why not? Shure, he's an honest, dacent, quiet lad. Av coorse, I'll give me wurrud for him!"

Thrusting his hands deeper in his belt, Kerrigan looked hard at her.

"I think," said he, "I'd betther see him mesilf. Mind, I don't make any promises. But I don't want you to think I'm hard on any frind iv yours. Iv you'll go in now an' tell him, I'll wait for him in the yard."

"Arra, now," exclaimed Biddy, suspiciously—"arra, now, constible, d'you mane dacent?"

"I won't give any promises," he replied, doggedly. "I'll just see him an' see what can be done. I won't arrist him."

"Ah, shure, that's all I want to know, constible, achushla," said Biddy, in her sweetest tones.

"I won't arrist him now," explained Kerrigan. "What I may do later on I can't say. It all dipinds on sarcumstances. I'll wait here for him now."

She hurried in. Kerrigan walked into the yard, where he stood beside the pump with his back to the house. It required all Biddy's tact, added to that of Mrs. Grogarty, to persuade Mike to come out of the coal-hole. After some minutes Kerrigan heard a heavy breathing noise with the shuffling of feet. Turning, he beheld the trembling figure and ashen face of the ex-moonlighter. The two women stood eagerly watching at the back door.

"Michael Rafferty," said Constable Kerrigan, sternly, "I want a wurrud or two wid you."

Mike was barely able to whisper assent. He looked as if he could fall with relief on the cobbled stones. Kerrigan glanced towards the back door.

"Step into the stable here," said he. "The women are watchin' us, an' I want to say what I've to say in privit."

With an anxious glance back at Biddy, Mike tottered feebly after Kerrigan, who strode into the stable, turning abruptly as the other entered. Then the constable closed the door a little, but sufficiently to exclude the gaze of the women.

"Now, Michael Rafferty——" he began.

"May I sit down, constible?" asked Mike, with an abject look.

"Ay, sit anywhere you like. Here," said Kerrigan, giving a kick to an upturned tub, "sit down there."

Mike sat down with a gasp. He pressed his hands together between his knees, bending his shaking head low.

"Are you listenin'?" asked Kerrigan.

"I am, sur," said Mike, without looking up.

"I'm going to say a wurrud or two to you now," said Kerrigan, standing before him, "but before I do that I want you to undherstand that I know what's agin you, what's rijistered agin you both as to the firin' into houses an' cuttin' off the tails iv five heifers——"

Mike groaned. Then he wiped his eyes with his sleeve.

"I've been thryin' to live honest an' dacent, sur," said he, hoarsely. "I was led away. Don't be hard on me, sur, for God's sake. I've an ould mother at home."

Kerrigan raised his hand warningly.

"That'll do, now," said he; "I know what's agin you, an' know what me jooty is. I can take you into custidy this minit, or I can take you into custidy at any minit this year or ten years hence, an' twinty years' panil sarvitude is what you'd get, not a day more nor less."

"Aw, mother, mother!" sobbed Mike.

"Let yir mother alone," said Kerrigan, sternly, "an' listen to me. I don't want to be too hard on you——"

"God bless you, sur!" exclaimed Mike, with grovelling gratitude.

"Wait a moment, now. Don't be so ready wid yir tongue."

"The divil a wurrud I'll say," responded Mike, servilely.

"I say I don't want to be too hard on you," continued Kerrigan; "an' what I want to tell you is this—it all dipinds on how you behave yirself as to what I'll do wid you."

"Aw, shure, constible," protested Mike, with uplifted hands, "I'll do anythin' undher the sun for you. Anythin' you like, on me sowl an' honor!"

"That'll do now. I've tould you how the matther stands. Iv you go agin me in anythin' you know what to ixpict."

He took a turn or two about the stable, cogitating, Mike watching him uneasily from under bent brows. When the constable abruptly stopped again in front of him Mike suddenly dropped his eyes.

"That young womin," said Kerrigan, jerking his thumb over his shoulder, "is a swateheart iv yours, I sippose?"

"D'you mane Biddy Magee, sur?"

"Ay, that's her name."

"Well," said Mike, uncertain as to the result of his reply, "she is in a way, sur, an' yet she isn't."

"Haven't you bin makin' love to her ivir since she came here?" demanded Kerrigan, sternly.

Still uncertain, Mike feebly smiled.

"Ah, shure, sur, she's a good-lukin', plump girl, but, shure," with a deep sigh, "it's somethin' else I've to think about——"

"Bekase," said Kerrigan, shortly, "I've taken a bit iv a fancy to her——"

A cunning look came suddenly into Mike's eyes. He slapped his knee.

"Well, that's mortal quare!" said he, looking up.

Surprised, Kerrigan looked down inquiringly at him.

"Bekase," explained Mike, with his weak smile, "she's taken the same likin' to you hersilf. Aw, divil a lie in it," he added, as Kerrigan seemed sternly incredulous for a moment. "'There goes,' said she—'there goes the finest lump iv a man in Ballinabog,' this mornin'," added Mike, breathlessly, "whin she saw you pass the winda. So help me——"

Kerrigan raised his hand.

"That'll do, now," said he. "I've bin fifteen year in the Foorce. That's enough, now. Iv yir goin' to play that game I know how to dale wid you."

Mike began a string of solemn oaths to strengthen his assertion, but Kerrigan stopped him.

"That'll do, now. I want none iv that," said the constable. "I've only this to say to you : iv you want her yirself, say so an' be done wid it."

"What!" exclaimed Mike, indignantly. "Is it me want her! Glory be to God, shure she wudn't luk the same side as me. Troth, sur, I'm not in humour for makin' love to any womin, not to spake iv such a fine, good-lukin' girl as Biddy. Shure, she's a hansum, dacent girl, right enough. Not me! Bedad, it's proud she'd be iv you cast an eye on her!"

Kerrigan looked at his gold watch.

"That'll do, now," said he, "me time's up. I've tould you, in rispict to yirself, I don't want to push matthers to ixthrames unless I'm foorced. But I'll call round here to-morra evenin' an' have a wurrud wid her. Iv you like to say a wurrud to her about it an' make matthers aisy I'll see what I can do for you. So mind yirself now, an' thry none iv yir thricks on me, d'you mind, for you know what I can do iv I only raise me hand. I'll call round an' see her at sivin o'clock."

Mike rose.

"An' y'll find her waitin' for you, sur," he exclaimed. "Thank you, sur! God love you!"

He shouted these words after the departing constable; then making a bound forward, he caught up a bright hayfork from the wall. Raising it high he plunged it rapidly several times into the ground where Kerrigan had stood. His face was dark with passion.

"I might ha' done it," he muttered, "whin his —

back was turned. Why didn't I? Well," after a pause, "mebbe it's betther as it is."

He walked out, leaving the fork quivering in the ground.

At the kitchen door he found old Mrs. Grogarty awaiting him. She took his hands in hers, drawing him towards the fire.

"Me poor son!" she exclaimed. "Shure yir thrimblin' like an aspen lafe. Sit down, achushla, an' kape up yir haart."

When he sat on the stool beside the fireplace he looked up at her, moistening his dry lips with his tongue.

"Have you a dhrop iv whiskey?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Aw, the divil save the dhrop. But wait a minit. Shure I'll go up and bring you down a sup iv the masther's. Stay there, achushla."

"Where's Biddy?" he inquired, as she was hastening away.

"She's up attindin' Miss Essie," said the old woman, turning. "Whist!" she held up her hand as she bent her head, "here she comes, shure enough."

Biddy entered, looking anxiously about until she saw Mike seated with his elbows on his knees, his head clasped in his hands, in an attitude of deep dejection.

"Aw, there he is!" exclaimed Biddy, joyfully.

The old woman caught her by the wrist.

"Whist, achushla," she whispered, "he's thrimblin' like an aspen lafe. Go to him an' cheer up his heart while I go upstairs for some iv the masther's whiskey."

As Mrs. Grogarty crept cautiously away Biddy advanced to the fireplace.

"Well, Mike, avic, so there y'are. Yir not tuk afther all."

Mike looked up.

"No, in throth, not yit, Biddy. But it all dipinds."

"Dipinds on what?"

"Well, you see, it's this way—I'm out on me prowl."

"What's that?"

"It's a kind iv arrangmint," said Mike, dejectedly, "whin you give yir wurrud not to iscape. An' to be iv good behaviur."

"An' how long has this thafe iv the wurruld let you out on yir prowl?"

"God knows," replied Mike, wearily.

He glanced anxiously towards the door leading to the stairs.

"Is she comin' wid the whiskey yet?" he asked.

"No! Glory be to God, I'd sell me sowl for a glass this minit though I tuk the plidge for six months."

Biddy stood before him with her fists on her hips.

"An' d'you mane to say," she inquired, "that yir goin' to stick to yir prowl instid iv goin' off now you've the chance?"

He looked up with an air of indignation.

"Is it break me wurrud?" said he. "No, thank God, I've not come to that yit."

Old Mrs. Grogarty entered with a small bottle of whiskey which Mike, taking from her hands, put to his mouth, keeping it there until the prolonged effort of swallowing made his face purple. He had a fit of coughing. Mrs. Grogarty slapped him on the back.

"You tuk it too fast, achushla," she said, maternally. "Don't be in a hurry. Shure there's plinty where that kem from."

When he had recovered he began to glance timidly at Biddy who, with sleeves tucked up, was scouring the table with freestone.

"Biddy," said he, after a pause.

She stopped work to look at him.

"He's a quare man, that polisman," he ventured to remark.

"D'you mane Kerrigan?" asked Biddy. "Shure he's not so bad at all. He let you off, an' that's a good thing."

Mike nursed the bottle on his knees.

"You wouldn't," he suggested, turning white—"you wouldn't like him for a swateheart now?"

Biddy wiped her hands on her apron; then she crossed the floor and took him by the shoulders.

"Out you go, now," said she.

"Shure, Biddy," he expostulated, rising.

She thrust him towards the door.

"Off wid you, now!" said she, angrily. "Afther what I done for you! Away now to yir stable!"

She opened the door. In another moment Mike was staggering alone in the yard.

CHAPTER XIV

KERRIGAN'S COURTSHIP

PUNCTUALLY at seven o'clock next evening Constable Kerrigan appeared rounding the yard entrance. He was off duty but wore his uniform of invisible green ; his hat tilted a trifle more to one side than usual. He carried a small cane. When he halted to look inquiringly towards the stable Mike quickly drew in his head in the loft until his enemy had gone to the kitchen.

Even then twenty minutes passed before Mike ventured to emerge from his concealment. When he crossed the yard he stood on the threshold of the kitchen assuming an appearance of profound amazement with his mouth and eyes wide open. Kerrigan was seated on the table. Mrs. Grogarty was busy around the fireplace where in a corner, with her face averted, sat Bidy, her red arms rolled in her apron.

"What !" exclaimed Mike, when he had gazed at the visitor for several moments in speechless surprise. "Is that yirself I see? Be me faith, it's welcome y'are, an' that's as thrue as gospil truth. What did I tell you, ma'am? Didn't I say he'd come here sharp to the minit whin he fixed it? I'll bet me last shillin' he was here as the clock was on the pint iv sivin!"

To check this effusive admiration Kerrigan observed, with some severity :

"I'm glad you haven't brokin yir prowl."

On his way to the fire Mike stopped to turn towards him with an expression of wounded pride.

"Arra, is it me yid say that to?" he said, reproachfully. "Break me prowl, is it? Afther I'd passed me wurrud fair an' dacent? Misther Kerrigan, sur, that's not fair now."

"I've bin fifteen year in the Foorce——" observed Kerrigan.

Mike was about to sit down on a stool opposite Biddy when he paused half-way.

"Fifteen year in the Foorce!" he repeated, with awe-stricken admiration. "D'you hear that, ma'am?"

To this loud whisper Mrs. Grogarty simply replied with a short grunt.

"D'you hear that, Biddy?" appealed Mike; "fifteen year in the Foorce!"

Kerrigan raised his hand.

"That'll do, now," said he. "Don't intherrupt me whin I'm spakin'."

"Aw no," returned Mike, shaking his head. "Aw no, sur. Intherrupt you, is it? Aw, faith, I know me place betther nor that."

"No man," observed Kerrigan, "ivir got the betther iv me durin' me sarvice."

Emitting a chuckle, Mike slapped himself on the knee.

"Bedad, they'd want to git up airly in the morn," said he, "to git the betther iv you!"

"That'll do, now," said Kerrigan. "I'm fifteen year in the Foorce, an' I mane to git an in the Foorce."

"Yir not gettin' on like a house afire, anyhow,"

observed Biddy. "Yir not a sarjint yit wid all yir fifteen year."

Flushing a little Kerrigan gazed sternly across at Mike, who looked with pained surprise at Biddy.

"Musha, Biddy," said Mike, "what the devil do you know about the Foorce? Shure, isn't that man there," pointing his pipe at the constable, "wan iv the clivirist min from this to Cark, an' shure what more d'you want? Git an in the Foorce? Iv coorse, he'll git an in the Foorce!"

"An' why doesn't he?" asked Biddy, contemptuously.

"Why——" began Mike.

"That'll do, now," interrupted Kerrigan; then, glancing sideways at Biddy, who kept her head turned away, "There's such a thing as gettin' thransferred an' the like iv that. There's such a thing as intherest, an' some min haven't got it——"

"Now where are you, Biddy?" expostulated Mike.

"There's such a thing," continued Kerrigan, warmly, "as gettin' a good station an' gettin' a bad wan. Wait a minit, now. How do we stan' here, in the town iv Ballinabog? Is there a chance for an active constible in this town? Is there any agitation goin' on? No. Are there conflicts betwane Nationalists an' Orangemin like what goes on up in the North? No. Are there any robberies, or mutilatin', or suicides, or incendiary acts? No. How then," he added, with disgust, "is an active constible to git an in the Foorce in such a rotten town as this? Answer me that now!"

Mike turned reproachfully to Biddy.

"Ay, in troth," said he, "there's somethin' for you to turn over in yir mind. Shure there's no chance at all at all. You see, Biddy, you don't know what yir talkin' about."

"Right well I know what I'm talkin' about," returned Biddy. "Haven't I got a cousin in the Foorce mesilf?"

"Have you dhin, now?" said Kerrigan, with interest. "Shure, dhin, you nivir tould me that." He edged towards the end of the table to be closer to her. "Shure," he added, in a low voice, "I'm glad to hear that, now. Where's he stationed?"

"In Shandravana," replied Biddy, curtly.

"Indade? An' what might he be called now?"

"Pathrick Kelly, constible."

"Didn't I tell you that, sur?" exclaimed Mike, gleefully. "Didn't I tell you she was fond iv the Foorce! An' shure, why not? Wid her own cousin a polisman! Shure, Biddy, you nivir tould me that ayther."

"There's many a thing I nivir tould you," said Biddy, "an' there's many a thing I'll nivir tell you."

"Aw, murther!" exclaimed Mike, appealing to Mrs. Grogarty, who went silently about her work with her nightcap pulled over her ears. "There's the wimmen for you; an' me thinkin' I was gettin' the soft side iv her! Ah, shure, there's no standin' up agin the Foorce. It's the rijimintals does it. A woman won't glance the same side as a poor counthry chap whin there's a polisman wid his helmit on an' a soord be his side. An' shure, afther all, small blame to thim, for there's some tarin' fine min in the Foorce."

Kerrigan raised his hand.

"That'll do now," said he.

Mike, rising, winked artfully at him as he knocked the ashes out of the pipe against the heel of his boot.

"I'll say this to yir face, sur," said he, "an' I wudn't say a wurrud behind yir back that I wudn't say before yir face. The girl that gits you, gits a rale man, an' a man," he added, straightening himself, "that'll git an in

the Foorce or anywhere else. For he has a fine head on his showlders——”

“That’ll do, now,” said Kerrigan.

“I’d say the same to Biddy there,” said Mike, pointing at her; “an’ shure, why shouldn’t she admire the Foorce whin her own cousin’s in it?”

After this burst of reckless flattery Mike went out, followed by the inscrutable gaze of old Mrs. Grogarty. He went to the stable, where he sat down dejectedly with his head between his hands moaning bitterly.

Half an hour later Kerrigan appeared, looking very displeased. His brows were knit; he tapped his cane restlessly against his leg. Halting before the stable he called out:

“Are you there?”

“Iv coorse I’m here!” answered Mike, appearing alertly. “Why not, sur?”

“Come here.”

With a glad smile Mike advanced. Kerrigan looked fixedly at him for a moment, then jerked his cane over his shoulder towards the kitchen.

“Iv that young woman,” said he, “doesn’t minnd her manners soon I’ll have you in jail before you kin luk round.”

“Arra, shure,” said Mike, reassuringly, “it’s the way iv the girls, sur. Shure, the more they like a man the more they purtind to be afeard iv him. She’ll come round fast enough.”

“That’ll do, now. I’ve said what I want to say. Mind you don’t forgit it, me man.”

With that Kerrigan walked stiffly away, while Mike, looking after him, stood meditatively scratching his head.

Returning to the kitchen he found Biddy, who had risen from her seat.

"Well, Biddy," remarked Mike, doubtfully.

"Arra, kape away from me," said Biddy, contemptuously. "I'd be hard up whin I'd want to thrubble meself wid ayther you or a red-headed polisman. Shure, yir no man."

"An' what am I?" retorted Mike, indignantly.

"Ah, shure," said old Mrs. Grogarty, looking up from her pan, "yir too hard on the boy."

Biddy put the end of her apron into the corner of her eye.

"Shure, he's not a man at all at all," said she, crying, "lettin' that polisman ordher him about like a dog."

"Now, there's where yir mistaken," said Mike, argumentatively. "Shure I was only foolin' him up to his eyes."

"I wudn't belave yir oath," said Biddy.

"Be me sowl, you may belave me oath," said Mike; "an' I say now, before this dacent ould woman here, yir the only girl I've wanted to make Missis Mike Rafferty. Don't you belave that, ma'am? Haven't I oftin said that to you whin her back was turned?"

"In troth you have, avic," assented the old woman.

"Shure, girl, don't be too hard on a dacent boy. Go an' give her a kiss, Mike, an' make it up."

"Troth I will, an' half a dozen!" exclaimed Mike.

Throwing his arms round Biddy he effusively kissed her red cheeks, when there was a loud tap at the window. Outside stood Constable Kerrigan, his eyes like two sparks. Mike's arms fell to his sides; his face turned ashen. Biddy thrust him contemptuously away.

"Yir masther there wants you," said she.

Having beckoned to Mike, Constable Kerrigan stepped out of view.

"Begor," muttered Mike, "it's all up wid me now."

He slunk to the yard where, still standing near the window, he found Kerrigan.

"Come over here!" exclaimed the constable.

Mike smilingly advanced when Kerrigan gripped him fiercely above the right elbow.

"Am I to take you off now widout another wurrud to the station? D'you think me a fool, do you? Did you suppose I'd bin fifteen year in the Foorce an' not know how to git an? Did you think to best me, me fine fella, whin me back was turned? Kissin' her, wor you?" He shook Mike. "Wid yir arrums round her, had you?" He shook him again until Mike's teeth chattered. "Now, dhin," said he, releasing him, "what have you to say in yir difinse?"

Standing there Mike looked at him for a moment in silence, then drew the back of his hand across his dry lips. Before speaking he attempted a feeble smile.

"Didn't I tell you, sur," said he, "that that young woman inside was fond iv you? Didn't I?"

Kerrigan sternly raised his hand.

"That'll do, now," said he.

"Wait a minit," said Mike, "didn't I tell you that? An' be me sowl, isn't it gospil truth? Shure, wasn't she confessin' it to me the very minit you looked in at the winda——"

"Now, me fine chap," said Kerrigan, crouching his head at him, "what d'you take me for? Didn't I see you kissin' her wid me own eyes?"

Mike smiled feebly again.

"Arra, iv coorse you did," said he—"iv coorse you did. Shure there's nothin' you can't see. An' what the divil matthers a kiss here or there iv I was only givin' her up whin she said she'd rather have yir little finger nor the whole iv me body? An' why not?"

Shure, aren't you a fine man standin' there wid a soord be yir side, able an' willin' to git an as high as you like in the Foorce, an' me only a thraneen, as you might say, mindin' an impty stable? Glory be to God!" added Mike, raising his eyes, "shure, I'd be a nice husbind for any dacent girl widout a pinny in me pocket or a shoe to me fut!"

"Well, that'll do now," said Kerrigan. "Yiv got a warnin'. I just showed you, yir not to play any thricks on me. Now, I'll let you go this time, but yir out on yir prow, an' it'll be long or short, just as you behave yirself——"

"Now, sur, I'll tell you what it is," said Mike, earnestly, "there's not a man in the townland 'ud hould a candle to you, and so she says hersilf——"

"That'll do now," said Kerrigan, "I'll kape me eye on you."

He went away. This time Mike looked stealthily round the gate until he saw Kerrigan safely out on the high-road. Then after the retreating figure he shook his fist, foaming at the mouth. When he turned back he glanced askance at the window. But Biddy's society was too dangerous at present. He ascended to the loft, where he lay on his stomach, smoking his pipe with fierce puffs, while he nursed his cheeks on his hands.

CHAPTER XV

KERRIGAN'S FICKLENESS

A WEEK passed without further sign from Kerrigan. Mike, keeping within the precincts of the house, began to nourish hopes of his enemy's decease or, at least, removal to some distant quarters. One day, however, he was out raking the gravel on the front path when a measured tread approached. He saw a man in a light tweed suit, brown kid gloves, and soft hat. With a pang of horror he recognised in this well-dressed visitor Constable Kerrigan. He rested on the rake until the constable arrived. Then he touched his cap.

"Fine evenin', sur," said he, respectfully.

Kerrigan, having knocked the ashes off his cigar with a gold-headed cane, replied simply with a stare.

"Beg pardin, sur," said Mike, touching his cap again, "did you wish to see the masther; or—mebbe," he added, meditatively admiring the costume, "the misthriss?"

Kerrigan raised his gloved hand.

"That'll do, now," said he; "it's not the first time yiv seen me, though mebbe it's the first time yiv seen me in me privit clothes."

Dropping the rake, Mike opened his mouth to its widest extent, at the same time raising his hands.

"Shure, sur!" he exclaimed. "Glory be to God, it's yirself! an' the divil a bit iv me knew you! Think o' that now! Shure, I thought you wor a jintleman—I mane a jintleman comin' to visit Sur Harbit."

Taking the cigar leisurely from his lips, Kerrigan flicked the ashes again.

"That'll do now. Is the young woman inside?"

"D'you mane Biddy, sur? Well, yis, iv coorse, shure she's in the kitchin, but," Mike smiled as he scratched his cheek, "shure, sur, she's up to her elbows wipin' the pots. An', bedad, it's herself 'll get the surprise. Shure, you'll take the sight out iv her eyes. Excuse me, sur, but indade it's the rale jintleman you luk, ivry inch."

"That's enough now. Is that ould woman there?"

"Well," replied Mike, hesitatingly, "I'm not quite shure, sur; but, shure, she's as deaf as a post an' as blind as a bat. She won't intherfare. To think iv you comin' like that!" he exclaimed, enthusiastically, "all in the bist iv style like the quality! Troth, it's Miss Essie you ought to be coortin' an' not a poor humble girl like Biddy."

Kerrigan turned fiercely on him.

"I'll coort," said he, "who I like. Mind now, kape a civil tongue in yir head. Whether I'm on jooty or off jooty, I'll kape an eye on you, me fine fella."

"Ah, shure, sur," began Mike, in a wheedling tone.

"That'll do now," observed Kerrigan, sternly, as he paced towards the yard.

Biddy with a coarse apron on, her sleeves tucked up above the elbows, was busy scouring a saucepan. Mrs. Grogarty had sat down to rest with her hands spread on her knees. When Kerrigan entered Biddy ceased scouring, to stare. In her astonishment she drew the

back of her hand across her face, leaving a black smudge along her cheek.

"God save all here," said Kerrigan.

He stood in the centre of the floor gazing complacently round.

"Why!" exclaimed Biddy, "the sorra wan iv me knew you in yir fine clothes. You tuk the sight out iv me eyes. Luk at him, ma'am. What can we do for you to-day, sur?"

She dropped a curtsey.

"I just dropped round," explained Kerrigan, "to have a luk at you."

"A luk at me!" said Biddy, with a laugh; "go long wid you! A luk at me indade! A nice objct I am to luk at, an' me scourin' the pots for bare life!"

Seating himself negligently on the table he tapped his boot with the cane.

"I come," he observed, "to do a bit iv coortin' wid you."

Bursting into a laugh, Biddy pressed her hands on her sides.

"Is it makin' fun iv me y'are?" said she. "Shure, yir honor, it's not a poor kitchin maid yid be afther coortin'?"

He studied her critically.

"Well," said he, "perhaps, it might be as well, iv yid go an' wash yir face, an' in the manetime I'll finish me sh'root."

He replaced the cigar between his teeth.

"Is me face dirty, ma'am?" asked Biddy, turning anxiously to Mrs. Grogarty.

"There's the laste taste of a smudge on yir chake," replied the old woman; adding under her breath, "Yir clane enough for the likes iv him."

"Aw, wurra, wurra," exclaimed Biddy, disconsolately, "to think that me face is dirty an' a rale jintleman come to coort me. Excuse me, yir honor, while I run into the room an' wash meself."

When she was gone Kerrigan puffed at his cigar a little, smacking his boot with the cane.

"A fine airy kitchin this, ma'am," he remarked.

Pushing out her ear with her hand, the old woman screwed up her face until it was full of wrinkles.

"Ay?" said she.

"Yiv fine premissis here," said Kerrigan, loudly; waving his arm.

"Oh, ay," assented Mrs. Grogarty, after a long pause. "Yis, thrue for you."

The conversation ceased. Biddy appeared with her face clean, her hair brushed. Moving a little aside Kerrigan tapped the table with his hand.

"You kin come an' sit here beside me," said he, "iv you like."

Turning her shoulder towards him, Biddy looked over it with an expression of extreme shyness. Then she began to bite the corner of her apron.

"Come on," said Kerrigan, impatiently.

"Aw, shure," said Biddy, "what 'ud me mother say? An' you in thim grand clothes too!"

"They're nayther betther nor worse," said Kerrigan, displeased with her behaviour, "than what I always wear whin off jooty."

"Are you off jooty, now?" asked Biddy.

"Don't you see I am?" he replied, angrily. "What sort iv woman are you at all? Iv course I'm off jooty," he added, more quietly. "I was axed to a game iv quoits at the station, but I thought I'd come up here instid."

"Do the polis play quoits?"

"Do they play quoits? Do they ivir do anythin' else in this disthricht? They play quoits an' cards an' rade an' smoke; mind you, there's min in the Foorce ud sooner be doing that than thryin' to git an. But I'm no card player nor quoit player nayther; I mane to git an in the Foorce."

"Shure, that's hard enough too," suggested Biddy.

"Hard? Ay, in a town like this where there's twinty-five min iv us, an' not more'n wan prisiner in the space iv a month. For a man that wants to git an in the Foorce, the town iv Ballinabog's wan iv the wurst disthrichts in the sarvice!"

Mike came sidling in, taking off his cap as he entered, with an air of abject servility. He went over to the fireplace, whence he lifted a coal to light his pipe.

"Are you comin' over here," said Kerrigan, doggedly, to Biddy, "to sit beside me or are you not?"

"Ah, shure, I've me rale swateheart here," said Biddy.

Laying her hand on Mike's arm she smiled over her shoulder at Kerrigan.

"Go an ow a that!" said Mike, hastily, "an' let me smoke me pipe in pace. Sure Misther Kerrigan wants you; go over to him now."

Pressing her strong hands on his shoulders, Biddy wheeled round the slight Mike. She stared reproachfully into his downcast face.

"Is that the way you thrate me, Mike?"

Mike gave an uneasy glance at Kerrigan.

"Arra, what are you talking about?" said he. "Is it a fool you want to make iv me, Biddy?"

Biddy flung her arms round his neck.

"Oh, Mike, achushla," she cried, "afther all the soft things you said to me, to thrate me like that!"

"May the devil's father fly away wid me!" exclaimed Mike, in a voice of anguish, as he strove to release himself from her muscular embrace. "Did you ivir hear the likes iv that? All the things I said to her! Bridjit Magee, yill be the death iv me. Oh, mother iv Moses, luk at him! He's goin' to take me! Don't mind her, sur," he cried, appealing across Biddy's head to the constable, "shure, it's only makin' game iv me, she is!"

"No, Mike, avic," sobbed Biddy, with her face on his shoulder. "Shure, yir the only man I ivir cared a jack sthraw for! Don't be afther goin' back on yir wurrud!"

"Oh, mother iv marcy, yir dhrivin' nails into me coffin!" yelled Mike. "Don't mind her, sur, it's all play-actin', she is."

Kerrigan got off the table; he pulled down his waist-coat with a businesslike air.

"It's quare play-actin'," said he. "Yid betther come along wid me, now."

"Whisht!" exclaimed Mrs. Grogarty, in a loud whisper, holding up her hand. "Here's the mistriss."

None of the others were struck with the fact that this old woman, so frequently deaf, should have been the first to hear the light footstep of her mistress on the stairs. But the warning had scarcely been uttered when Biddy was in a corner busy hanging a dish-cover on a nail; Mike was bending over the fire with a tongs, searching for a coal to relight his pipe, while Kerrigan, turning his face to the door, took off his hat as Essie entered.

She had a small, empty basket on her arm, and wore a large straw hat. For a moment she stood surprised at sight of the visitor, who, for his part, was so struck

by her sweet appearance, that he involuntarily glanced from her to Biddy as if comparing the two.

"Good evenin', miss," said Kerrigan, "I hope I see you well?"

"Thank you," said Essie.

"You don't same to rekignise me out iv me uni-forrum," observed Kerrigan, with a short laugh. "Me name's Kerrigan—Cornaylius Kerrigan, Constible."

Essie looked at him doubtfully, then a sudden gleam of recognition appeared in her face.

"Oh yes, of course," said she. "Let me think."

She put the tip of her finger to her lips.

"Oh yes," more genially. "You were the constable who arrested that old man——"

"Ay, the ould fella wid the pig. Yir rispicted father, miss, had him relased. It wasn't much iv an arrist. But, in a town like this, even an ould man wid a pig's betther than nothin'. I'm sorry, miss, yir rispicted father tuk him out, bekase, you see, I'm a man that manes to git an in the Foorce, an' even a bit iv a case like that 'ud have sarved me."

"But he was a poor, harmless old man ; he really wasn't doing any harm, was he?"

"Well, he was goin' agin the law, anyhow, an' iv coorse I must discharge me jooty to the bist iv me ability."

"Oh yes, of course, you were perfectly right, no doubt. Father, I am sure, would not like to interfere, except in a special case. He won't allow it to do you any harm, I am certain."

"Thank you, miss."

"Mike," said Essie.

Suddenly looking up, Mike took the pipe from his mouth.

"Yis, miss?"

"Is the garden gate open, Mike? I want to get a few flowers."

"I'll go an' see, miss."

He was away on the instant, glad to get to an open space where he could breathe more freely. Essie, having arranged some paper in her basket, prepared to follow.

"I hope, miss," said Kerrigan, pacing close behind her, "that the smokin' iv me sh'root doesn't inconvenience you?"

She glanced back over her shoulder with a smile.

"Not in the least, thank you."

"Thank you, miss. I'm aweer," said Kerrigan, in his most polished manner, "that many leedies have a powerful ibjection to the parfume iv a sh'root; but, iv the smokin' iv this wan inconvainiences you——"

"I like it. Father smokes."

They had entered the yard together, Kerrigan a pace distant from her side. Though anxious to get to the garden as quickly as possible, Essie could not wound his feelings by hastening, so modified her step across the cobbled pavement.

"You see, miss," observed Kerrigan, confidentially, "whin the mimbirs iv the Foorce are off jooty it's on-necessary to ibsarve that we indulge in a little harmless divarshin—iv coorse, in a supariour manner. The lower orthers, miss, luk up to us. But iv the smokin' iv the sh'root——"

They had now reached the garden gate behind the stables. Mike stood there respectfully holding the gate open.

"Well, Mr. Kerrigan," said Essie, pausing, "if you

would care for a few flowers, you can pluck them. We have plenty to spare."

"It's very kind iv you, miss. But I won't thrubble you just at prisint."

She made a slight inclination of her head as she passed, Kerrigan staring down the path after her until the bushes hid her from sight. He was aroused from his reverie by Mike gently closing the gate. It took some time for Mike to settle the gate. He stooped down, purporting to examine the bolts; opened it; kicked some gravel aside, and finally closed it. During these operations he managed to steal furtive glances at his companion, who appeared in a brown study with his arms folded.

"She said 'Misther Kerrigan,'" muttered the constable.

Mike gave the gate a shake.

"'Iv you wud care for a few flowers you kin pluck thim,'" mused Kerrigan.

Mike shot a bolt, then pulled it back again. The sound startled Kerrigan. He gazed fiercely at Mike, who drew the back of his hand across his mouth.

"Yir misthriss," said he, "is a soft-spoken young lady."

"Thrue for you," assented Mike, heartily, "an' shure you nivir said a thruer wurrud, sur."

Kerrigan paced slowly back towards the yard, his head still bent, his hands behind him loosely clasping the gold-headed cane. Mike followed at a respectful distance. Kerrigan halted near the stables. Mike stopped close at hand.

"Luk here, now," said Kerrigan, glancing keenly at him under knit brows, "that young woman inside isn't actin' at all to me likin'."

"D'you mane Biddy?" asked Mike, timidly.

"Ay, Biddy. There's too much of the play-boy about her for me."

"Shure, that's only her way——" began Mike.

But Kerrigan raised his hand.

"That'll do now," said he.

He gazed thoughtfully on the ground. Mike drew the back of his hand again across his mouth, all the while feverishly watching the other's face. Kerrigan looked up.

"Has Miss Essie e'er a swateheart?" he asked.

"Swateheart, is it?" replied Mike. "Arra, where 'ud she get wan? Shure the jinthry have all desarted thim since they come down in the wurruld."

"Ay, shure enough," observed Kerrigan, as if speaking to himself, "they're poor enough now, anyhow."

"The divil a swateheart has the poor crayture," said Mike, pityingly; "an' shure, it's a mortial pity, for she's a purty little bit iv goods, an' faith she's just as willin' to have a swateheart as any other girl iv she got the chance. Shure, for all her delikit, dainty ways an' all that, she'd be glad to be married——"

"Why so?" asked Kerrigan, quickly.

Mike looked about. Then, approaching closer, in a mysterious voice, behind his hand, he observed:

"Shure, the ould man lades her the divil's own life."

"D'you tell me so?"

Mike shook his head sympathetically.

"Ay, troth. The poor young crature's heart's broken wid him. An', in truth, I think he'd like to see her settled wid a good, steady husbind, for he knows well enough she's not happy where she is."

Ay," said Kerrigan, meditatively. "But these

jinthry, they're proud as paycocks wid all their poverty."

"Is it Miss Essie proud?" returned Mike, with an air of profound astonishment which arrested Kerrigan's attention. "Shure she's as mild a little thing as walks the earth. Proud? No, sur. She's no more proud than meself. Bedad," he added, brightly, "a well-set-up man, an' a dacent man, an' a man that manes to git on in the—in the wurruld—well, sur, it's not for me to say, but she's of'en mintioned yir name to me be the same token."

"Arra, dhin, what did she say?"

"Oh, nuthin' in partiklar," said Mike, evasively. "Iv coorse I can't tell what goes on in the minds iv people like that. Though, be the same token, I worked for a family betther off an' betther borrun nor Sur Harbit; an' the young lady there—a swate, delikit crature too—run off wid the coachman. I knew him well, Barney Doyle be name. His ould mother sowld cabbiges. He was no betther nor me to luk at, an' I'm not much."

"Wait a minit," said Kerrigan. "What did Miss Essie say about me?"

Mike scratched his head.

"What's this now? Aw, yis, to be shure. She was walkin' wan day, out there be the gate ayant, an' saw you passin'. 'Mike,' ses she—I was rakin' the gravil, though, faith, it 'ud want a couple iv cartloads—'Mike,' ses she, 'who is that polisman out there?' ses she. Shure enough, I loked up and saw yirself, sur. 'Shure, that's Misther Kerrigan, miss,' ses I, 'wan iv the clivirist mimbers iv the Foorce from here to Cark,' ses I——"

"That'll do now," said Kerrigan. "What did she say then?"

"'Kerrigan?' ses she. 'Yis, miss,' ses I. 'A good ould Irish name,' ses she. 'Ay, miss,' ses I, 'almost as fine a name as O'Hara,' ses I. 'Be me sowl, Mike,' ses she, 'I think, iv it comes to that, it's a betther name,' ses she; an' dhin she ses, lukin' afther you, 'What's his Christian name?' she ses. 'Well, miss,' ses I, 'I belave he was christened Cornaylius.' 'That's a rale nice name too,' ses she. Whisht!" said Mike, interrupting himself, "she's comin' back from the gardin."

He looked round the corner of the stable. Essie was struggling with the gate which he had tightly closed.

"Hould on a minit, miss," he shouted, running to her assistance.

He quickly opened the gate. Taking up her basket of flowers, which she had laid on the ground, Essie passed out. Near the stable Kerrigan suddenly appeared. She started.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "is it you?"

The colour returned quickly to her face. He stared hard at her.

"Ay, it's me," said he, "Cornaylius Kerrigan, at yir sarvice. Thim's purty flowers."

Essie hurriedly arranged them with the tips of her fingers.

"Yes, indeed," she assented. "Would you like some?"

"Shure, dhin, I wudn't like to diprive you iv thim," said Kerrigan, graciously; "but iv you cud spare me wan for me buttin'hole I'd take it as a mark iv favir."

"Here's a pretty geranium. You are very welcome to it."

She handed it to him, then hurried away.

Kerrigan was complacently fixing the flower in his coat when he heard a low chuckle near him.

"What did I tell you, sur?" said Mike. "Didn't I say that it's not afther a poor, ignirint, counthry girl like Biddy the likes iv you shud be wastin' yir time——"

"That'll do now," said Kerrigan, settling his hat, then pulling down his waistcoat. "Rimimbir what yiv do to do. Do you be iv sarvice to me——"

"Bedad I will, an' I know how, too!" said Mike, with a cunning look.

"That'll do now." Kerrigan raised his warning hand. "I'm goin' now; an' I repate, be iv sarvice to me whin an' how you can, an' I'll be iv sarvice to you."

"The divil run away wid me," exclaimed Mike, enthusiastically, "iv I don't see that Miss Essie doesn't forgot you. You may thrust me, sur, to know me bisniss."

"I'll kape me eye on you," said Kerrigan.

He walked away, glancing at the upper windows before leaving the yard. As he paced slowly towards the gate, with his hands clasping the gold-headed cane behind him, he glanced sideways at the flower in his buttonhole.

"'Is that you?' ses she," he muttered. "Glad enough at the sight iv me. 'Yir very welcome to this purty jirranyium. Yir very welcome,' said the daughter iv Sur Harbit O'Hara."

Having reached the gate, he opened it, resting with his hand on the bars as he gazed back towards the house.

"Is that hersilf," he muttered, "peepin' out at me

through the winda? Hould up yir head, Cornaylius Kerrigan !”

After another prolonged stare through the bars, he turned in the direction of the town.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SHAN VAN

WHEN Essie went upstairs her father was preparing to go out. She helped him with his overcoat, after which she tied a muffler about his neck. She handed him his hat and stick, then stood on tiptoe to be kissed. He tenderly raised her chin.

"Dear, heroic child," he murmured, as he bent down.

After a moment's irresolution she detained him with a hand on his arm. He looked inquiringly at her.

"Father."

"What is it, duck?"

"I am afraid, father, you hurt that young school-master, Mr. Maguire, very much. I did not like to worry you about it before."

"Hurt him? How so? I do not recollect."

"The night," explained Essie, falteringly, "when he came home with you. When he was standing at the door and you were going upstairs, you said——"

"Well, madam? I said——"

"'Is that son of a peasant gone yet?' I am afraid, father, he was hurt by that. You don't mind my mentioning it?"

"No, I do not mind you mentioning it," said her

father, sternly, "but I am at a loss to know why you mention it."

She stood before him, her eyes cast down.

"If you happen to meet him and—and say a kind word to him——"

"Why, God bless me, I have no intention of saying anything unkind to the man!" exclaimed her father. "Who is he? Is he not the son of a peasant? Do you want me to apologise to a common peasant?"

She remained silent, not venturing to raise her eyes until he seized her by the arm.

"Look here, Essie," he exclaimed, pointing with his stick round the room. "You see this hovel to which I have been reduced? Mark it well. And mark this too: if it were fifty times more wretched, I am still Sir Herbert O'Hara and you are my daughter. Do not let your surroundings demoralise you. Go on my knees to a base-born peasant? And at your request? Ah, I have fallen very low indeed!"

With hand raised aloft at this declaration he turned abruptly and left the room. While she stood at the window a few moments later she saw him going towards the high-road, walking slowly. With her face pressed to the window-pane she watched him out of sight, relieved to find that he had turned his back on the town.

But Sir Herbert, having walked some distance deep in thought, hesitated, then retraced his steps. He stopped at Mr. Flanagan's shop. Entering he looked into the bar parlour, which was empty. He went into the kitchen, where he found Mrs. Flanagan busy at the table beside the open back door.

"Always at work, Mrs. Flanagan," he observed.

When she recognised him, she hurriedly wiped her hands in her apron.

"An' is it yirself, Sur Harbit? Well, who'd have thought it!"

He looked approvingly round.

"Always the good, tidy housewife," he said.

Mrs. Flanagan busily dusted a chair.

"Always rubbin' an' scrubbin', Sur Harbit, in saisin an' out iv saisin; no rest for the weary! Will you be plaised to sit down on this chair, sur?" she added, glancing apologetically at it, "iv yill ixcuse the liberty iv axin' you to take a sate in the kitchen—or mebbe yid like to rest yirself in the parlor?"

Standing easily in the centre of the flagged floor, Sir Herbert put his hands under his coat-tails.

"Mrs. Flanagan, I merely dropped in like a bird, madam, of passage. Pray don't put yourself about in the least. Continue your domestic work, Mrs. Flanagan, if you please."

"Shure, it's only a dumplin' I'm makin' for the tay, but I won't be a minit, iv there's anythin' I kin do for you."

In homely fashion he sauntered to the door where he looked out.

"An excellent yard," said he, drawing back hastily.

"I see you keep pigs."

"Well, me husbind, he's fonder iv pigs nor iv in-doore wurruk. Indoore wurruk doesn't suit Pathrick Flanagan, excipt whin it's dhrinkin' an' smokin' an' playin' cards wid some iv his choice companyins. It's hard wurruk, sur, for wan poor lone woman to kape a roof over the house singlehanded, as wan might say."

"Which reminds me," said Sir Herbert, "your lodger, Mr. What's-his-name?"

Resting her fists on the table Mrs. Flanagan looked at him.

"Misther Maguire, d'you mane, sur? The school-masther?"

"Ah yes, of course. I believe he is a schoolmaster, and I believe his name is Maguire. Nice young man?"

"Well, he's not much advantige in the matther iv supportin' the house. But he's dacent an' quiet; nayther dhrinks, smokes, or plays cards, weekday or Sunda."

"An admirable young person. But poor?"

Having resumed the kneading of the dumpling, Mrs. Flanagan paused again, her hands deep in the paste.

"Well, Sur Harbit, he's nayther poor nor rich. He's nivir backward wid his debts——"

"Indeed?" remarked Sir Herbert, coldly.

"What I mane to say—iv coorse the rint's a small matther, an' he's no difficulties like some other people."

"Ah!"

"Yis, sur. An' as for bein' rich or poor, I belave he has great expictations from his uncle in America; though I'll say this for Misther Clarence—he doesn't know the value iv money; he thinks no more iv givin' it whin he has it than the newborrin child. An' he's that quiet yid nivir know he was in the house; nivir the laste sign iv trubble, an' takes what he gets an' whin he gets it an' how he gets it."

While she spoke Clarence himself entered to replenish a water decanter. When he saw the visitor he would have hastily retired, but Sir Herbert called to him.

"Ah, Mr. Maguire, I am glad to see you. How are you?"

Hesitating at the threshold Clarence muttered mildly

that he was very well. Slowly advancing a step Sir Herbert held out his hand.

"My dear fellow, let us be friends."

Having deposited the decanter on the dresser Clarence took the outstretched hand.

"Mrs. Flanagan, our good friend here," observed Sir Herbert, "has just been giving you a most excellent character. In fact, if I did not see you with my own eyes, I should believe you quite a superhuman person. I should indeed. Yes. Is that not so, Mrs. Flanagan?"

"I'll nivir say behind his back," remarked Mrs. Flanagan, "what I wudn't say before his face."

Sir Herbert placed a hand on Clarence's shoulder.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I want you to oblige me. You have a head for abstruse matters—legal documents, for instance. I want your assistance. Will you do me the favour of coming round to my place to-morrow?"

Clarence turned pale.

"I am afraid," he began, "I have some things to do. I——"

Sir Herbert smiled at his embarrassment.

"My dear boy, I ask you as a favour."

Mrs. Flanagan glanced quickly up.

"I'm shure," she observed, "that Misther Maguire won't refuse to iblige a gintleman like Sur Harbit."

Clarence muttered that it would give him great pleasure. Sir Herbert gave him a little friendly shake.

"Thank you," said he. "To-morrow evening. Fix your own hour. Shake hands!"

Next evening Clarence faithfully arrived at the Red House, his thin clothes carefully brushed. For some hours he laboured patiently through the pile of legal documents on the table, reading them aloud to Sir

Herbert, who took voluminous notes, while Essie, after a prolonged attempt to look interested, began to yawn furtively behind her hand. As for Clarence himself, he read so much that at length he began to pause and stammer as if he was dealing with a strange language. Essie having whispered to her father concerning the visitor's jaded appearance, Sir Herbert magnanimously requested him to rest. Tea was served.

"We are to be honoured shortly," observed Sir Herbert, "by the presence of no less a person than the Shan Van Vocht, or, as they call her about here, for short—the Shan Van."

Essie, who was leaning with folded arms on the back of her father's chair, nodded across at Clarence.

"Yes, indeed," she added. "She has been in the town, and I hear she is to come to see her old friend, Mrs. Grogarty."

"She is a power in the land," said Clarence. "The people believe in her."

"My dear sir," said Sir Herbert, "she is profoundly versed in the mysteries of fairies and changelings and that sort of thing. A very pretty idea, of course ; very poetical."

"I don't believe in it, myself," said Clarence.

"Well, as father says," observed Essie, "the idea of fairies in the moonlight and weaving spells is quite romantic. You must acknowledge that !"

Glancing up at her, he coloured deeply, but remained silent, casting down his eyes again.

"You are not romantic !" said Essie.

"I am afraid I am not romantic enough for such things," he said, slowly.

There was a loud whisper of "Miss Essie !" Turning, they saw Biddy at the door in a state of suppressed

excitement, her body half in the room. Her eyes were starting. She beckoned to her mistress. Essie went to her.

"Miss Essie, the Shan Van's in the kitchen," whispered Biddy, "an' Mrs. Grogarty ses she'll talk quare to-night be the luk iv her eye."

Essie turned delightedly round.

"She has come!" she exclaimed.

She hurried downstairs with Biddy. The Shan Van was sitting at the fire, smoking a small blackened clay pipe, which went up and down with the working of her toothless lips. Nursing her face in her hands, she blinked at the embers. Her stick lay across her lap. Opposite, on a small form, sat Mrs. Grogarty, who seemed almost juvenile in comparison. The Shan Van took no notice of Essie, who seated herself lightly on the table.

On a shelf beside the fireplace burned a shaded lamp, which threw a gigantic shadow of the crouching Shan Van on the opposite wall and half-way across the ceiling.

"Is she spakin' quare, ma'am?" whispered Biddy, bending down to Mrs. Grogarty's ear.

"Whisht!" replied Mrs. Grogarty; "don't intherfare wid the thoughts iv her."

Taking the pipe from her lips the Shan Van spat into the fireplace; after which she groaned, wiping her mouth with the back of her shrivelled hand.

Over her old garments she wore a cloak which had a green hue like moss on an ancient building; a battered bonnet projected above her brows.

Presently she began, as if in soliloquy:

"I tould him she'd die; for I marked the day an' the hour."

Biddy bent down.

"What's she talkin' iv?" she asked, breathlessly.

Mrs. Grogarty gave the girl an impatient thrust with her elbow.

"Whisht, for the luv iv God!" said she.

"Bekase," said the Shan Van in shrill, trembling voice, "I heerd the Banshee three times ayant the haggart. Three times it cried an' it cried."

Clearing her throat with a respectful cough Mrs. Grogarty ventured :

"An' who might it be now, ma'am?"

"Maggie Connor," replied the Shan Van, without change of attitude. "She died last Sathurda whin the cock crewed."

Mrs. Grogarty crossed herself.

"God presarve us!" she exclaimed, "is Mrs. Connor dead? An' all her young childher left? God rist her sowl!"

"Whin the Banshee cries wanst," said the Shan Van, "it's bad; whin it cries twyste, say yir prayirs; whin it cries third an' last time, light the howly candles!"

Mrs. Grogarty groaned.

"That's throe enough," said she. "An' so Mrs. Connor's dead. Well, God be good to us!"

"Whin I kem to Connor's house," said the Shan Van, "I saw the magpie sittin' on the wall. I axed, 'Is there anywan sick here?' No wan sick. 'Git riddy the bed,' ses I, 'an' put clane sheets on it, for there'll be sickniss in this house,' ses I, 'before the full moon.' 'How's that?' 'Be signs an' tokins,' ses I, 'that nivir fail.'"

Taking the black pipe from her lips she spat again; pulling hard for several minutes in a profound silence broken solely by Mrs. Grogarty's sympathetic groans.

"Maggie Connor," pursued the Shan Van, "was sittin' at the table darnin' the childhers' socks. 'Put up thim socks,' ses I, 'an' put the sheets on the bed,' ses I, 'for it's yirself 'll want thim.' 'Yir jokin', ses she. 'What's that on the candle?' ses I. 'Glory be to God,' ses she, 'it's the windin'-sheet.' 'It's the windin'-sheet,' ses I. 'Maggie, may God have marcy on yir sowl!'"

The Shan Van, who spoke fitfully, nursing her face on her hands, took some vigorous pulls at the black pipe. Mrs. Grogarty, never taking her fascinated gaze from the visitor, gasped while her trembling fingers worked in her apron.

"An' she died at cockcrow?" she observed, in a whisper that was heard over the kitchen.

Taking the pipe from her mouth, the Shan Van spat on the cinders; then, drawing the back of her hand across her lips, resumed her smoking.

"Thim" said she, "that doesn't heed the signs an' tokens iv the Shan Van nivir know the hour or the minit whin they'll be tuk!"

"She died," repeated Mrs. Grogarty, with trembling voice, "just as you said she wud. She passed at cock-crow. God have marcy on us all!"

No one save Essie from her perch on the table observed the entry of Clarence, who took up a position sufficiently close to permit him to study the features of the Shan Van. He had not seen Essie.

"Who is dead?" he asked Mrs. Grogarty, abruptly.

Mrs. Grogarty turned her head with a start, but the Shan Van made no sign.

"Shure, Maggie Connor ayant the hill," answered Biddy; "died last week, sur, an' the Shan Van here tould her the day an' the hour, though she hadn't the sign iv sickniss on her."

"And how could the Shan Van foretell her death?" asked Clarence, sternly, his eyes levelled at the Shan Van's face.

"Shure, sur," replied Biddy, "be the signs an' tokins that she knows. Shure iv she doesn't know, who does?"

"Signs and tokens!" exclaimed Clarence. "Is this old vagrant still travelling about the country with her tricks and lies?"

Turning slowly round, the Shan Van shaded her eyes as she took a long stare at him—a stare which Clarence faced with one of contempt and hatred.

"Who's spakin' iv the Shan Van in that tone iv voice?" said the old hag. "Is it you, Clarence Maguire, as you call yirself?"

"It is I, Clarence Maguire;" he replied, "and I tell you what I would do with you and your signs and tokens if I had the power——"

"Iv he had the power," repeated the Shan Van, nodding at the astonished Mrs. Grogarty.

"I'd lock you up in prison," said Clarence. "You're too great a rascal to be sent to the poorhouse."

The Shan Van grimaced horribly. Her pipe, falling from her mouthing lips, lay smashed on the floor. Rising, her bent figure vibrating with rage, she stamped her stick on the ground, pointing at him with shaking hand.

"Luk at him!" she cried. "Iv he had the power! Yis, iv you had the power, Clarence Maguire. But there's no wan knows you betther nor me, what y'are wid yir lame fut an' yir white face; an' you know what I am——"

"A common vagabond!" exclaimed Clarence, excitedly. "Look! Let us have some light to see you

as you are." Hurrying to the lamp he turned it to the full, the Shan Van wheeling round to follow his movements. "Look!" he exclaimed; "an unwashed old woman covered with vile rags; a scarecrow to frighten children and fools!"

The Shan Van raised her stick on high.

"Be the crass above me," she cried, "an' be the crass below me," bringing the stick down with a thump, "an' be all the saints in glory, there's not a hearth or home in the county that won't know what y'are before the holy Chrissmiss. Rimimbir that, Clarence Maguire!"

Clarence's attitude, facing the enraged old woman with disgust on his face, changed at once as he caught sight of Essie perched on the table. He instantly went towards her. The Shan Van looked after him a moment, then sat down. Essie slid from the table as Clarence advanced.

"You must excuse me," said he, confusedly, "I did not know you were present."

"I would not have missed it for worlds," she returned.

"The fact is," he stammered, "I do not think she should be encouraged."

She made no remark. He glanced timidly at her. She gazed steadfastly towards the nodding head of the Shan Van.

"Good-night, Miss O'Hara," he faltered.

"Good-night," she replied, coldly.

He went away, limping heavily as if in pain.

CHAPTER XVII

A NIGHT FOR FAIRIES

THE Shan Van slept that night in Mrs. Grogarty's bed, while Mrs. Grogarty shared with Biddy the old settle in the nook beside the kitchen fireplace. In the morning the Shan Van made a hearty breakfast, attended by the obsequious Mrs. Grogarty, who presented her with one of the master's pipes to replace the blackened clay that had been smashed. Biddy having gone upstairs to help Miss Essie to prepare breakfast, the Shan Van sat over the fire smoking. As she spread her shrivelled palms to the blaze she turned her face partly towards Mrs. Grogarty, who modestly sipped her tea on the opposite stool.

"That's a fine lump iv a girl yiv got," remarked the Shan Van.

"Is it Biddy, ma'am? Indade, she's just like the rest of the young gadabouts, though she's biddable enough. I won't say a wurrud agin her behind her back."

Balancing the saucer on the palm of her left hand she raised the cup to her lips.

"She's got swatehearts, now?" inquired the Shan Van. "She's gudlukin' for that, I warrant."

"She has a polisman afther her," assented Mrs. Grogarty. "The likes iv him wid his red head!"

"A polisman, no less?"

"Aw, the thafe iv the wurruld! Constible Kerrigan be name. But she wudn't walk the same road wid him. The girl has a bit iv sperit."

"Ay, ay; she has another swateheart?" suggested the Shan Van.

"Troth, dhin, that boy in the yarrid out there; a clane, honist, gud-for-nothin' chap."

"Mindin' the stabil?"

"Ay, troth. Mindin' the stabil widout as much as an ould ass in it. Mike's a dacint lad, though be the same token he hasn't a shillin' to jingle on a tombstone. Shure he's good enough for her. But, what 'ud the likes iv thim do gittin' marrid? Shure it's paupers they are, the poor crathurs!"

Having finished her tea, Mrs. Grogarty placed the cup on the floor while she laboriously wiped her mouth with the end of her apron. The Shan Van smoked in silence. Soon after Biddy came down saying that Miss Essie wanted Mrs. Grogarty, who, with many groans and rubbing of her knees, prepared to go upstairs.

"You won't see me agin," remarked the Shan Van.

"Shure, dhin, yir not thinkin' iv goin', ma'am?" said Mrs. Grogarty, pausing on her way. "Won't you stay for dinner?"

"There's many a mile for me to-day," said the Shan Van. "I'll be well on the road whin yir takin' yir dinnir. I've warned you agin Clarence Maguire."

"Oh, the hivins be me bed!" exclaimed Mrs. Grogarty, raising her hands.

"But yiv thrated me well," continued the Shan Van, "an' I'll see that you come to no harrum."

"Shure, dhin, why shudn't I thrate you to the bist I have?" said Mrs. Grogarty, extremely grateful. "An' I

warrant, there's few places where the Shan Van isn't welkim, God rest her !”

“God be wid you,” said the Shan Van, turning abruptly to the fire.

When Mrs. Grogarty had left, Biddy, standing at a distance, gazed with nervous fear at the back of the Shan Van's nodding head. A few moments of silent suspense passed.

“Come here,” said the Shan Van, without looking round.

Pale with dread, her limbs trembling, Biddy came softly towards the fireplace.

“What is it, ma'am ?” she asked, with a shaking voice.

The Shan Van's sharp little eyes glittered over her a moment.

“Have you any money ?”

“I've sixpinse,” replied Biddy, with a start.

“Sixpinse ?” repeated the Shan Van ; then, after a pause, “Give it t' me.”

After a nervous search deep in a pocket which seemed to end near her ankles, Biddy drew up her solitary sixpence. She handed it to the Shan Van, who bit at it several times before putting it in the dirty canvas bag secreted in her bosom.

“Help me up,” said the Shan Van.

Having risen to her feet she caught her breath sharply ; then, holding Biddy's pliant palm close to her eyes, gazed intently at it.

“Yiv got a swateheart.”

“Yis, ma'am,” admitted Biddy, blushing.

The Shan Van put the hand a little closer to her eyes.

“Yiv got two,” said she.

“Shure, you know ivrything !” said Biddy, wriggling.

Resting her hands one on top of the other on her stick,

the old woman, in crouching attitude, gazed into space, Biddy trembling more than ever beside her.

"I see a man in uniforrum," said the Shan Van, in a low voice. "Is he a sojer or a polisman?" She shaded her eyes. "He's a polisman. Don't let him come next or nigh you."

"Aw!" said Biddy, with her mouth open.

The Shan Van gazed towards the pots at the far end of the kitchen.

"I see a dacint lad. He's poor, but he'll be well off whin he's marrid. I see him workin' in a stabil. He's goin' afther you an' yill be marrid to him."

"Aw!" repeated Biddy, ready to faint.

"Good-bye, achushla," said the Shan Van. "It's not ivry wan I'd tell their fortin for sixpinse. But, shure, next time yill have somethin' betther for me!"

Awed by these revelations, Biddy remained as if rooted, while the Shan Van hobbled out of the kitchen, mumbling to herself as she crossed the yard.

Meanwhile Mrs. Grogarty attended her mistress upstairs.

"The Shan Van seemed surprised by what Mr. Maguire said," observed Essie.

Mrs. Grogarty lifted her eyes towards the ceiling.

"Surprised, miss? The Lord be praised, did anywan ivir hear such langwidge to an ould cratur like that? Aw, murther, didn't I think she'd turn on him ivry minit an' make him go up the chimbly. The heart nearly lept in me body."

"Go up the chimney?" exclaimed Essie.

Looking round with a startled air Mrs. Grogarty raised her hand mysteriously.

"Whisht, miss; shure they might hear you. Spake low, miss, iv you plaze."

"Who might hear me?"

Bending forward over the table, her hands resting on the cloth, Mrs. Grogarty whispered :

"The fairies, miss. Don't you know, miss, they say—but shure, you must know what they say about Misther Clarence Maguire?"

"Indeed, I do not. I don't know who 'they' are in the first place."

"Arra, miss, the people, the people," explained Mrs. Grogarty, shaking her forefinger towards her mistress. "An' it's the Shan Van herself that found it all out be the saycrit thricks an' signs an' marks that's known to herself. May the hivins be her bed; it's a wise womin she is!"

Essie turned pale.

"What is this mystery," she asked, her voice falling despite herself, "about Mr. Maguire?"

Having glanced anxiously round the room, Mrs. Grogarty bent forward still further to whisper :

"He's a changelin', miss."

"A what? A changeling?"

"Yis, miss, shure enough. God forgive us all our sins! There now, miss, you know as much as mesilf. It's a tirrible bisniss, miss, but shure thim that's nateral," added Mrs. Grogarty, with a pious sigh, "naden't be afeard iv the powers iv darkniss."

To hide her agitation Essie had risen, arranging flowers on the table. She stopped to look at the old woman, who was saying a prayer in a subdued voice with upraised hands and eyes.

"Well, for my part," said Essie, "I don't believe a word of such stuff."

"Aw, there y'are, miss. Shure, I know well enough that some people say wan thing an' some another. It's

not for a poor ould rheumathic crathur like me to be pryin' into their dark ways. But, shure, what can you do, miss? You can't git rid iv the fairies. Shure, luk at him, miss. Ivry wan knows his father an' mother wor poor, honist crathurs, that cudn't rade nor write, but they'd both fair hair, miss, like yir own only coarser, an' wor sthrong an' hearty. An' dhin, you see, miss, what he is; a wake white lame thing wid big, black eyes, an' hair as black as the sloe, miss. An' don't you mind, miss—there's no larnin' that he doesn't know, not to spake iv the saycrit signs an' tokins that the Shan Van knows an' kin sware to."

"There, that's enough," said Essie, angrily. "I'll finish the table myself. You make me ill with your horrible superstitions."

Groaning, as she rubbed her back, Mrs. Grogarty moved to the door, where, however, she turned a moment, shaking her head.

"I don't want to say a wurrud, miss, but shure the whole counthry——"

"Go downstairs," said Essie, turning her back.

"Aw, there y'are, miss. I shud have held me tongue. I'll nivir say another wurrud. But I'll nivir have pace nor aise till he stops comin' to this house, miss; for it's bad luck must folly him wherivir he is!"

With a prolonged groan Mrs. Grogarty descended, holding hard to the baluster, when she heard herself recalled. Returning, she stood humbly in the doorway. Essie came towards her.

"Don't let me hear any of these stories again. And take care that the master does not hear you talking about them. He likes Mr. Maguire."

"Is it me to talk before his honor? God forgive you, Miss Essie, an' me in yir sarvice nigh forty year.

Indade, an' in troth, I'd bite the tongue out iv mesilf first. I'm not the wan for spreadin' tales. I'm too full iv rhuematisum an' pains an' aches in the body an' bones iv me. At the prisint momint, miss, wud you belave me, but I'm not able to stand straight wid the thrimblin' in me legs and the pain in me back like the knife goin' through me heart. Aw, wurra, wurra ! Me talk, indade !"

"Very well. Don't forget."

That evening Essie waited with unusual interest for Clarence. Sir Herbert, also expecting him, had piled on the table a heap of legal documents, with some account-books dating from the time of his great-grand-father. But Clarence did not arrive. The following night he was also absent. About midnight, before retiring, Sir Herbert informed his daughter that he was sure the young man must be ill. Next day he sent a friendly note by Mike, addressed "Clarence Maguire, Esquire." Clarence came the same evening. Essie, entering late, found her father animated, but Clarence in a state of resigned dejection.

"Ah, Essie," observed her father, "what is the hour ?"

Clarence rose.

"I must be going," said he.

"Oh, my dear boy, I did not mean that as a hint," said Sir Herbert, laughing. "Sit down. The night is young yet. My dear," he explained to Essie, "I have been trying to convert him to the theory of fairy changelings. But he is terribly sceptical."

Essie, who had been taking off her hat, paused with a look of horror.

"Oh, father, it is not possible !"

"What, my dear ? What is not possible ?"

"That you should have been talking like that to Mr. Maguire!"

"Why not? He was interested. It helped to pass the time."

"Mr. Maguire is perfectly right," said Essie. "It is nonsense."

"Well, well, have it your own way," returned Sir Herbert. "Then you won't stay, Mr. Maguire? Well, come to-morrow night. I shall expect you. Good-night, my boy!"

For some time after he had gone Essie stood at the window gazing dreamily out. The full moon, in a clear sky, showed distinctly the 'road, trees, and grass' plot. Not a leaf stirred.

"That young man," observed Sir Herbert, drowsily smoking in the big arm-chair, "should take more care of himself. He is delicate. He is, I must say, a most estimable young person, and his services, gratuitous though they are, are rendered with charming affability."

Essie continued to gaze at the starry sky.

"Father!"

"What is it, my child?"

"Do you really believe in fairies?"

"My dear, that is a very abrupt question."

"But, do you?"

"Well, to be plain with you—there are so many things in nature, you know, which are inscrutable, and the things we do not know may possibly be more surprising than the things we do know. To put the matter shortly it stands this way: there is such extraordinary evidence cropping up from time to time which, of course, I admit, may be coincidence, although the tales are so astonishing that really coincidence would positively be an

explanation more extraordinary in itself. There are many things, you know, my dear, which have been believed in persistently for ages by different peoples, and still exist despite the march of science."

"But what is your own opinion?" insisted Essie.

"Really, my dear, I have no opinion on the matter. As a reasonable man I am open to conviction. There may be beings around us who may or may not from time to time give indications of their presence under certain conditions, conditions which may be atmospheric or ethereal or something else which we do not understand. The fact is, I have no belief in the matter one way or another."

"Well," said Essie, "do you believe in changelings?"

"That, my dear, is a branch of the same subject. I am neither prepared to believe or disbelieve in it."

"The people about here seem to believe in it to a great extent."

"Well, I have never troubled myself about the matter," said Sir Herbert.

"If there are fairies," said Essie, softly, "this is the night for them!"

For a long while she continued to stand at the window holding the curtain aside. She watched the moon in the clear sky, until one little white cloud after another seemed to creep out from between the stars and disappear again. Then she studied the ground where the shadows of the trees lay dark, until they appeared to take strange living shapes and move. By degrees the mystery of the night awed her. Dropping the curtain she turned.

Her father was snoring in the arm-chair, his face

turned to the ceiling, his hands loosely resting on his knees. She went over and watched him for some minutes. There was no sound in the house, because the two women and Mike had closed the kitchen door, and were talking round the fire in whispers of the Shan Van and the fairies. Going closer to the arm-chair, Essie sat down on the floor beside her father, leaning her cheek against his hand. In a few moments he opened his eyes, then, raising his head, slowly brought his gaze to bear on the bowed figure beside him. She was holding his hand tightly now, sobbing softly. He sat up, surprised.

"Why, Essie, my child, what is the matter? You are not crying?"

She sobbed on. He took his hand gently from her grasp to look at the back of it. It was wet with tears.

"Essie, my darling, my love, what is wrong? What has happened?"

She held tightly to his arm, raising her face to him with startled eyes.

"Oh, father, you are all I have in the world!" she exclaimed.

He stared dumbfounded at her terrified face.

"What—what do you mean, child?"

"You will not leave me, father? You will not leave your poor Essie alone in the world?"

"Leave you, my darling? What are you dreaming about?"

"Oh, father, it would be so terrible to be left alone in the world! I would rather be dead! Stay with me, dear, as long as you can!"

She commenced to cry afresh. He bent over her, putting his arms round her.

"What fit is this?" he asked, with his lips against her hair. "What is my poor child thinking of?"

She shivered.

"It is so lonely, father!"

He drew her nearer, kissing her hair while she crept closer till her face rested on his breast.

"Ah, my poor child! It is, God knows, it is a lonely business. If you would only go to your aunts——"

"No, no, father. With you always, always."

"Well, well, my child, do not cry. While God spares me I shall remain with you."

She answered with a sigh so deep that her father, alarmed anew, drew back her face to look at her. Her cheeks and eyelashes were wet with tears, but she smiled at him.

"It is only your poor little Essie—your child, father."

"Yes, my darling, yes; but don't give way to these fits, dear; they distress me; try and keep up. My love, we shall yet be happy, believe me."

"Oh yes, father. It is very wrong of me, but I could not help it. You were asleep, and the house was so quiet, and the moon was so bright, I—it came on me so suddenly, the loneliness of it all! But I shall be brave, father." She took his hand, kissing it again and again. Then she stood up, tossing back her hair from her face with both hands, smiling at the time. "Yes, you must have a smoke, father; I shall fetch your pipe and light it!"

He watched her curiously, as, with an air of forced good-humour, she filled the pipe, then, placing it between his lips, held the light at the bowl.

Soon after, when she bade him good-night, she

hurried, shivering, past the lobby landing where the moon looked in at the little window, glinting on the first steps of the stairs and making a bright white patch on the floor.

CHAPTER XVIII

A POOR SCHOOLMASTER

MR. FLANAGAN, in shirt-sleeves, was standing at his door. He had been attending three men and a woman in the snugery. After this exertion he felt himself entitled to a rest ; so, his arms folded, he complacently smoked—his bulk almost filling the doorway—until he caught sight of Constable Kerrigan slowly pacing up the street. Mr. Flanagan turned round uneasily, gazed at the interior of the shop ; turned again, then, putting his head cautiously out at the doorway, saw that the constable was coming nearer.

After some cogitation Mr. Flanagan walked meditatively to the rear of the shop, where he thoughtfully regarded some goods on the shelves ; finally, he went through the kitchen. His wife was busy at the wash-tub. Still, reflectively, he passed into the yard, where he put his back against the wall, to watch the pigs rooting in the sty. He had not been many minutes there when Patsy, running into the yard, plucked the leg of his father's trousers.

“Daddy ! daddy !”

“What's the matther wid you, now, Patsy ?”

In Patsy's excited, upraised face the eyes were unusually bright.

“There's a polisman in the shop, daddy !”

Mr. Flanagan looked down thoughtfully at the boy.

"A polisman, Patsy?"

"Yis, daddy. An' he's calling for some wan."

Turning to the wall Mr. Flanagan gravely knocked out the ashes of his pipe, then put his hands in his pockets.

"A polisman? All right, Patsy. Very well."

He went through the kitchen, his wife turning her head to glance at him.

"There's a custimer in the shop," she remarked, "callin' for you, but iv coorse yir nayther here nor there nor anywhere when yir wantid, but out in the yarrid starin' like an omadhaun, at the pigs. But I must worrk an' sthrieve!"

Paying no heed to these remarks, Mr. Flanagan stepped more alertly into the shop with Patsy at his heels. As he entered he heard some one shouting, "Is there no wan here?" Next moment he confronted Constable Kerrigan.

Mr. Flanagan looked him up and down.

"What's the matther wid you?" he asked.

"Is there no wan here?" shouted Constable Kerrigan.

"What sort iv a shop is this wid no wan in it? Is there no wan here?"

"I'm here," said Mr. Flanagan, slowly. "What's wrong wid you?"

"You're a nice man!" exclaimed Kerrigan. "What d'you mane be lavin' the primisis widout any wan in it? Iv you wor in charge iv a horse an' vayikle I'd have you in custiddy in half a minit, me fine fella!"

Mr. Flanagan grew a little redder than usual. He was unconscious of the trembling Patsy, who, with terrified eyes fixed on the constable, stood nervously twitching at his father's trousers.

"Can I do anythin' for you?" asked Mr. Flanagan, cautiously.

"That'll do now," returned Constable Kerrigan; "yir not goin' to git the upper hand iv me, me man. I want to go upstairs."

Mr. Flanagan emphatically shook his head.

"You won't go up the stairs iv my house," said he.

"What d'you mane?" inquired the constable. "D'you want to bring thrubble on yir head? Is that what you want?"

"You won't go up the stairs iv my house," repeated Mr. Flanagan, "unliss you perjooce a sarch warrint. I've med inquiries in laygal quarthers regardin' this matther, an' until you perjooce a sarch warrint, up the stairs iv my house"—Mr. Flanagan suddenly brought his huge fist down with terrific force on the counter beside him—"yill not set a fut!"

"A sarch warrint!" exclaimed Constable Kerrigan, excitedly. "That'll do, now. Is there no wan here?" he shouted over Mr. Flanagan's head.

Patsy, unable to control his pent-up terror, burst into a roar of anguish. The three men and the woman rushed from the snuggery. Mr. Flanagan began to turn up his shirt-sleeves.

"Ayther you or me," said he to Kerrigan, "laves this house. It won't be me, for I'm the ownir an' proprieter. So, out iv this house you go!"

He was about to lay violent hands on Kerrigan, who, in anticipation of the assault, was rapidly adjusting his belt, when Mrs. Flanagan, her arms bedaubed with soapsuds, rushing from the kitchen, flung herself on her husband.

"Is this the way you want to kape the roof over me an' the child?" she screamed. "Is this what I've

worked an' sthrived for till the flesh is almost worrin off me bones? Is this the return for all I've done for you, an' the sacrifices I've med for you?"

Mr. Flanagan strove to disengage himself from her slippery arms.

"Margit," said he, huskily, "let go yir houl. I've an account to settle wid this man, an' I mane to settle it now or nivir!"

"To brhing disthruction an' woe on me an' me child!" said Mrs. Flanagan, wildly. "There's the return for me dhrivin' an' sthrivin'! Go in ow a this! Into the kitchin, I say!"

"Out iv this house he goes!" shouted Mr. Flanagan. "Let me alone, woman!"

But Mrs. Flanagan pushed him till he turned round while he shouted back his words over her head. At every push she exclaimed:

"Killin' an' murther! Me an' the child that I ra'ared!"

In his anger Mr. Flanagan would, however, have successfully combated his wife's efforts, if one of the men had not come forward, and, taking his arm, said, in pacific tones:

"You know me: Jo! Betther go in. Shure he's not worth batin'!"

These words sobered Mr. Flanagan. He shook the man's hand before walking into the kitchen, followed by Patsy bellowing to the full extent of his lungs. Seating himself, Mr. Flanagan slowly pulled down his sleeves, the peacemaker standing beside him patting his shoulder.

"I'm not a fightin' man, Mr. Gilligan," observed Mr. Flanagan, "but I'd have bet him within an inch iv his life."

"Yid only demane yirself," returned his friend.

"Oh, daddy, daddy!" cried Patsy.

"Stop cryin', Patsy," said his father, gently.

"Oh, daddy, daddy, don't fight!" sobbed Patsy—"don't fight the polis!"

"Stop cryin', Patsy," said his father.

"Shure he'd kill you!" cried Patsy, "wid the soord he has be his side!"

Mr. Flanagan gazed thoughtfully at Patsy for a moment, then, without a word, slowly drew forth his pipe. With the pipe in one hand and a lit match in the other, he looked steadily at his friend.

"Jo Gilligan," said he, "I'm not wan that's given to quarrellin', or nayther," he added, with an effort, "to rowdyism in any shape or forrim, but iv you hadn't intherfared I'd have bet that man within an inch iv his life."

"Yill burn yir fingers, daddy!" exclaimed Patsy, excitedly.

Mr. Flanagan, finding that the match had burned to his nails, flung it away. Thursting his fingers into his waistcoat-pocket again, he brought forth another match, which he struck, as before, on the sole of his boot.

"Iv there's a man," observed Mr. Gilligan, emphatically, "in the town iv Ballinabog that 'ud stan' up an' bate you, Jo Gilligan has nivir seen that man. But what wud you be after demanin' yirself for? Shure you wudn't dirty yir hands on the like iv him. I've known you the length an' breadth iv forty year," said he, extending his hand, "an' I knew yir father."

Mr. Flanagan, who had his pipe in his mouth, was about to light it, when he threw away the match to take the proffered hand.

"Ay," said he, musingly, "you knew me father. God rist him!"

"Me name's Jo Gilligan," observed his friend, visibly affected, "an' I'm not ashamed iv it."

"It's a good name," responded Mr. Flanagan. "There's many a man 'ud be proud iv it. Patsy!"

"Yis, daddy."

"Here's a pinny for you, me boy. Go an' buy some shugar-stick now, an' play about a bit. Come an' kiss me before you go."

While Patsy embraced his father, Mr. Gilligan, having searched several pockets, at length found a penny, which he also slipped into Patsy's hand, and the boy left the two men alone.

Meanwhile—her husband having disappeared—Mrs. Flanagan turned sharply on Constable Kerrigan.

"What do you want, me man?" she asked.

The constable, having settled his disarranged tunic, pulled round his belt till the buckle was fairly in front. Grasping that belt firmly with both hands, he looked from under his heavy eyebrows at the little woman.

"There's a young man here," he observed, "that lodjis upstairs, as I'm tould. His name's Maguire."

"Very well," returned Mrs. Flanagan. "What's the matther wid him? What's he bin doin'!"

"What he's bin doin', or what he hasn't bin doin'," said Kerrigan, doggedly, "is not to the pint. I come here to see him, an' I mane to see him, because iv I have a jooty to discharge I discharge it, an' iv I've privit bisniss to thransact I thransact it. What d'yiz want?"

Facing abruptly round, he roared these last words at the small group of customers who still stood gaping outside the snugery. The result of his sudden chal-

lenge was their hurried departure. Facing round again to Mrs. Flanagan, he said, more quietly :

"I don't want to intherfare wid you, ma'am, but I desire a little privit convirsation wid Misther Maguire iv convanyient."

"Come wid me," said Mrs. Flanagan.

She led him through the door into the private hall, thence up the stairs until they arrived at the top landing where the ceiling sloped. Here she knocked at the door.

"Are you there, Misther Maguire ?" she called.

There was silence a moment. Then Clarence rose, saying :

"Do you want me ?"

As he spoke he opened the door.

"There's a man here that wants a wurrud wid you," observed Mrs. Flanagan.

With his hand on the door, Clarence grew a shade paler as he saw, over Mrs. Flanagan's head, the stern face of Constable Kerrigan.

"Don't be frightened, me frind," said the latter, "I'm not on ificial bisness at all. I come just to have a wurrud wid you in privit. There's not the laste fear iv you."

"Come in," said Clarence.

He turned, leading the way. Constable Kerrigan paused before closing the door, to dismiss Mrs. Flanagan with a brief, "Thank you, ma'am."

Clarence seated himself on the low bed. Having taken off his cap, Kerrigan wiped his brows with a handkerchief which he carried concealed up his sleeve. He blew his breath noisily as he looked round and up at the sloping roof, within a few inches of the top of his head.

"Yir not rowlin' in wealth here," he observed. "It's a quare place this for a man to live."

"Beggars can't be choosers," returned Clarence, mildly.

"Tachin's poor worrk," remarked the constable, thrusting the handkerchief little by little up his left sleeve. "Is there any place where I kin sit down?"

Rising hurriedly Clarence limped a pace or two till he came face to face with a thin chair which had been carefully propped against the wall beside the small fireplace. It was the only chair in the room, and creaked miserably when lifted.

"Put that down agin," observed Kerrigan, "I wudn't thrust meself on it."

With the chair still in his hand, Clarence looked dubiously about.

"There's the bed," said he, "or the window."

"Iv I sat on that bed," remarked Kerrigan, gazing thoughtfully at it, "yid nivir slape another wink on it. The winda? Ay, I'll thry the winda."

The ceiling sloped down to the top of the little window, whence could be obtained a limited view of the wall surrounding Mr. Flanagan's back yard. The sill was about a foot from the floor. Here, however, the constable carefully sat down, stretching out his legs until his feet touched the small table in the middle of the room. When he was settled the place became darker.

"I'm afraid that's very uncomfortable," said Clarence, anxiously.

"Well, nivir mind. Sit down."

Clarence resumed his seat on the bed, tucking his legs under it to avoid knocking them against the visitor's knees.

"Yir as poor as a church mouse up here," said Kerrigan, "an' I sippose, a matther iv five shillins or so 'ud come handy to you?"

As he spoke he gazed in front, lest by turning his head he might damage the ceiling, so that he did not observe the sudden flush on Clarence's face, followed by a deeper pallor than usual.

"I'm not in want of money," said the schoolmaster at length. "I've little, but it's enough."

"Well, I want you to do a job for me," said Kerrigan, "in the writin' line, an' I don't want to give a man a job widout payin' for it."

"I'll be glad to be of service to you, but I don't want to be paid."

"There's a sartin amount iv delikisy about it," said Kerrigan, slowly drawing up his right leg to rub his ankle, "and it requires saycricy. It's betwane you an' me. Perhaps I'd betther tell you, an' dhin we'll talk iv how much there's to pay."

As there was no rejoinder he turned his eyes, but not his head, until satisfied that Clarence was attentive, when he proceeded:

"The fact iv the matther is, I've tuk a fancy to a young womin, an' I want to write a letther to her."

"I understand."

"No, you don't. The way the matther stands is this. I've raisin to belave she's tuk a fancy to me, but she's bin ra'ared in a diffirnt station to mine."

"Police station?"

Kerrigan turned so quickly that the movement shook the attic. At a glance, however, he was satisfied of Clarence's sincerity.

"She was brought up on a higher spear," he explained.

"Ah!"

"What's the matther wid you?" inquired Kerrigan, observing his companion's agitation.

"Nothing. Yes, I know. A different sphere. Well?"

"Well," said Kerrigan, drawing up both legs to rub his knees, "I want to break the matther jintly to the young womin. A nice letther, now, wid somethin' about her fluttherin' buzzum or thrimblin' heart 'ud do. Bein' a tacher yirself I thought you cud put it in a betther way nor me. I'd like to put in the fluttherin' buzzum."

"Do I understand that you are in love with a young lady and you wish me to write a letter which you copy and sign?"

"Purcisely." Kerrigan nodded. "Purcisely. That's it."

"I have never done anything like this," observed Clarence, thoughtfully. "It is not in my way."

"I won't stick at a couple iv shillins," returned Kerrigan. "I've sed five. I'll say sivin. Will you do it for sivin?"

"I have told you I'll not take any money. If I could oblige you in this or any other way I should do it with pleasure. But the fact is—to write a letter like that—at second-hand—it looks like forgery!"

"Why, what have you got to do wid it?" asked Kerrigan, surprised. "Isn't it only like a task or a lessin? You can throw in a bit iv poethry iv yir harrud up for wurruds. I'll tell you what I'll do wid you. Bring in the fluttherin' buzzum an' I'll make it half a sovvin. Come, now!"

Folding his arms, Clarence lapsed into reflection so prolonged that Kerrigan after a while repeated, in a vexed tone :

"I won't go a pinny higher. Half a sovrin ! Why, it 'ud git you a new coat !"

At length Clarence turned his face. His eyes grown luminous seemed but faintly conscious of the constable's presence.

"You naden't kimpose it now," said Kerrigan, hastily. "I'm not in any hurry. A week or a fortnight 'ull do."

"Do you," asked Clarence, in a hushed voice, "love her—this girl who is above you ?"

"Shure, I sippose I do. I nivir sthopped to think the matther out. I'm goin' to make love to her, anyhow."

"I shall try," said Clarence, slowly, "to write the letter."

Rising with a groan, Kerrigan stretched out his limbs.

"There's pins an' nadles in me leg," said he. "This is the quarest ould shanty ivir I was in. Very well ; write the lether. D'you want anythin' in advance ?"

He thrust his hand into the pocket inside the breast of his tunic.

"You will not be convinced," said Clarence, rising. "I shall write the letter if possible, and you shall read it and see how you like it."

"All right. Good-day to you." Kerrigan shook hands, adding, "Don't forgit the bit iv poethry about the fluttherin' buzzum."

He went out. He had been so engrossed in his affairs of the heart that he had forgotten his encounter with Mr. Flanagan. Leaving by the private door, he slowly paced down the street, his hands behind his back, cogitating as he went along.

It was now dusk. As he neared the corner where the muddy thoroughfare of Chapel Lane branched from the main street, a long, yellow-faced man stepped from

a doorway, placing the tips of his fingers on the constable's sleeve.

"I beg yir pardin," said the man, politely.

Halting, Kerrigan looked at him.

"I beg yir pardin," said the man again. "Me name's Gilligan."

"Gilligan?" repeated Kerrigan, absently.

"Tailir," explained Mr. Gilligan. "Numbir fiftane, Chapil Lane. Might I have a wurrud wid you?"

As he spoke he mechanically felt the texture of the constable's sleeve between his finger and thumb.

"What d'you want wid me?" asked Kerrigan.

Bending closer, and mellowing his voice to a tone of friendliness, Mr. Gilligan observed :

"There's a little matther that I think 'ud betther be settled in a quiet an' frindly manner. There's no raisin in the wurruld why it cudn't be over an' done wid in less nor ten minits an' no wan a bit the wiser. I'm a paceable man meself, an' so is me frind that wants to sittle this matther wid you, an' he's axed me—in a frindly and quiet way, bein' an ould frind iv mine an' a dacent, unassumin' man—he's axed an' riquistid me to make an irrangemint wid you that wudn't intherfare wid yir jooties or cause the slightist onconvaynyince in the wurruld."

Listening with bent head as to an official report, Kerrigan had glanced up from time to time with a puzzled expression, while Mr. Gilligan, mechanically rubbing the sleeve of the tunic between his finger and thumb, laboriously explained his mission. When he had finished Kerrigan shook his head.

"I don't undherstan' a wurrud iv what yir sayin'," he remarked.

"In a frindly an' quiet way," explained Mr. Gilligan,

with increased suavity, "in the cornir iv Murphy's field or whirivir's convanyient. I'll come to the pint. Me frind, Misther Flanagan, purveyir an' jiniral marchint, has a small account to settle wid you, an' axed me—wid his complimints—that ayther in Murphy's field or behind his back yarrd, where there's a quiet bit iv a cornir, where you an' he cud have the matther out in the coorse iv a few minits, widout any onconvaynyince or any wan bein' a bit the wiser."

"That'll do now!" exclaimed Kerrigan, roused by the mention of Mr. Flanagan's name. "Is this a brache iv the pace yir dhrivin' at? Are you puttin' yirself out iv yir way to be tuk up an' put in jail? Is that what you want?"

"Me dear sir," explained Mr. Gilligan, anxiously, "shure. there's no quistion iv bad blud or anythin' the likes iv that in the case. It's a matther iv a frindly meetin' in the cornir iv a field wid sorra wan to luk on but meself an' any frind iv yours you like to bring."

"What are you pinchin' me slave for?" said Kerrigan, jerking his arm away. "Lit go yir houl. How dar you put yir hand on me uniforrum?"

"Shure," said Mr. Gilligan, admiringly, "it's a dacent good cloth, an' 'ull wear well."

"Yid betther git on about yir bisniss now, me fine fella," said Kerrigan, sternly, "or I'll put you where you won't be makin' mischief. I'll kape mè eye on you!"

At this moment Mr. Flanagan, who had been concealed round the corner of Chapel Lane, came forward with an assumption of quiet indifference.

"Well, Jo," said he, "have you settled the matther?"

"All in good time," replied Mr. Gilligan, turning to his friend; "the constible's a raisinable man, an' he knows we don't want to make any fuss about it."

"I'm ready to mate him, Jo," said Mr. Flanagan, directly addressing his friend, "any hour or any place he plases, an' he can bring as many or as few frinds as he likes. It's all the same to me."

"You see, sur," observed Mr. Gilligan, politely turning to the constable, "you naden't be afeard that me frind, Misther Flanagan, wants to take any advantige iv you. What d'you say yirself, sur? Come, now, in a frindly an' quiet way, what d'you say yirself? What time 'ud suit you?"

Kerrigan stepped off the footpath.

"That'll do now," he exclaimed. "I see the sort iv min y'are, an' I'll kape me eye on yiz. Mind that now! I know you, me fine chaps!"

With that he backed a little further; then, turning, walked rapidly to the other side of the street, where he stopped, faced round, and stared fixedly across at them. The two men gazed in surprise from where they stood. Then Mr. Gilligan, suddenly dropping his polite manner, became excited.

"Come back ow a that!" he shouted across the street. "Come back ow a that, you—you—you——"

"Be quiet, Jo," said Mr. Flanagan, laying his hand firmly on his friend's arm.

"Come over here!" shouted Mr. Gilligan, dancing with rage on the pavement. At the same time he attempted to tear off his coat—an attempt which Mr. Flanagan hastily frustrated. "Come over here, an' I'll knock the head off you, you—you—you——"

He choked with wrath, becoming white from the forehead to the chin.

"Jo," said Mr. Flanagan, sternly, "are you a frind iv mine?"

"Don't hould me, Misther Flanagan!" cried Mr.

Gilligan. "Let me get across at him! Let me go! Come over here, you—you—you——"

Mr. Flanagan firmly placed his arm round his friend's shoulder.

"Joseph Gilligan," said he, "come home wid me."

"Come over here!" yelled Mr. Gilligan, shaking his hands in the air towards Kerrigan, who stood motionless grasping his belt. "Iv yiv the sign iv a man in you come over here——"

"Come home wid me," repeated Mr. Flanagan. "Luk at the people comin' round you. Go back ow a that!" he exclaimed, turning to several men and boys who began to approach. "Go back, I say. Jo Gilligan, iv yir a frind iv mine, an' iv I've known you forty year, come home wid me. Come, I say!"

Forcing his friend round, he caught him by the elbows, hurrying him along the footpath until both were out of breath. Mr. Gilligan made several attempts to rush back, but Mr. Flanagan held him fast.

"He's not worth batin'. Come home, Jo."

"He's not!" assented Mr. Gilligan, buttoning up his coat with an abrupt change to comparative quietude. "Let him go, the spalpeen!"

"He's not worth batin'," repeated Mr. Flanagan, taking his friend's arm. "Come wid me, Jo, an' have a glass iv whiskey."

They walked on, the small crowd gazing disappointedly after them. Constable Kerrigan watched them until their figures grew dim in the dusk, then, muttering, "I'll kape me eye on thim," he paced steadily towards the station.

CHAPTER XIX

KERRIGAN'S ARTFULNESS

A WEEK had elapsed since Clarence's last visit, so that Essie was glad to see him approaching as she came through the gate of the Red House.

"I am going down the street," she observed, when she had bade him good evening, "and I had fully made up my mind to call upon you. Where have you been?"

"Where?" he repeated, slowly.

"Yes, you have deserted us."

"Deserted you?"

She laughed at his manner.

"Well, you have come now," said she. "Father is ill."

"I'll? I am sorry. What is the matter with him?"

She shrugged her shoulders, at the same time drawing a diagram on the ground with the end of her parasol.

"Nothing much," she replied. "He will be glad to see you."

"Maybe," stammered Clarence Maguire. "I'd better see him. I didn't intend to call any more, but maybe I'd better, if you don't think I'd be intruding——"

"Did not intend to call?" Essie repeated his words with an air of stupefaction.

He glanced swiftly up at her, then, reddening, looked down.

"Not call?" she repeated, reproachfully.

"I'm afraid," he said, stumbling over his words, "I've no right—I intrude on you—I mean, on your father——"

She laughed again.

"What an idea!"

At that moment a voice shouted :

"Yip up! Garr!"

Clarence Maguire turned pale as he saw an old man with bowed white head laying a stick across the haunches of a ragged brown donkey, on whose sides were two panniers of turf. It was his grandfather, whose eyes at that moment met his. Clarence, with a sudden horror of his uncouth relative, turned his face away.

"Who is that old peasant?" said Essie, gazing after him. "I think I have seen him before."

Clarence was silent. Essie turned to him.

"Well, go now to father," said she, "and don't get such ridiculous fancies into your head. Why, your visits are quite a pleasure to father. If you only knew! And"—she turned back, having walked several paces—"don't go till I come back."

To these words he replied with a silent nod, before turning in through the gate.

At the head of the road, where he had stood a motionless spectator, Constable Kerrigan, after several moments' deep cogitation, paced very slowly towards the entrance, his chin on his breast, his hands grasping his belt. When he arrived at the gate he halted to look through the bars. Clarence was exchanging greeting with Mike who was raking the path.

Waiting until the schoolmaster was close to the house, Constable Kerrigan, slowly extending his right hand, pushed open the gate and walked in. The creaking of the rusty hinges made Mike look up. His first expression of dismay at sight of the new-comer rapidly gave place to one of assumed delight.

"Well, well," he exclaimed, leaning on the rake as the constable approached, "an' is that yirself, sur? Who'd have thought it! Shure, yir welkim as the flowers iv May!"

Halting in front of Mike, Constable Kerrigan looked sternly at him, up and down, for several moments in silence, during which Mike squirmed a little, but threw as much joy into his face as he could assume under such distressing circumstances.

"Now dhin," said Kerrigan, with a jerk of his head towards his left shoulder, "what's the maynin' iv this?"

"What's the maynin' iv what, sur?" asked Mike, bewildered, adding enthusiastically, "Shure, iv there's any maynin' to be got out iv anythin' or anybody I'm the man to git it for you ; iv it's maynin' you want."

"That'll do now," said Kerrigan, angrily. "What's the maynin' iv that chap there hobnobbin' wid yir mistriss outside the gate?"

Following the direction of the constable's nod, Mike caught sight of Clarence's back as he limped modestly into the stable yard.

"Is it that?" said Mike, with a jerk of his thumb. Coming a step nearer, he added, in tones of profound contempt, "Shure, sur, that——! Shure, that's only the schoolmaster!"

Kerrigan looked at him impatiently.

"An' don't I know that," he exclaimed, "as well as yirself? Don't I know very well who he is? D'you

think I'm stayshined here an' not know who ivrybody is an' what their bisniss is ?”

Mike laughed exultingly as he slapped himself on the thigh.

“Be me sowl,” said he, “iv you don't know, who does? I'll warrant there's not a man, womin, or child in the townland you don't know !”

“That'll do now. How does it come he's on sich frindly tarms wid yir misthriss? Tell me that, now.”

Stepping back Mike opened his mouth. He could not speak for a moment, so great was his surprise at such a question.

“Frindly tarms? Wid the misthriss?” he repeated.

“Thim wor my wurruds,” said Kerrigan, with a menacing air. “Didn't I see thim at the gate hobnobbin'?”

Mike began to smile, wriggling his body.

“Shure, sur! Aw, shure, that's only Miss Essie's way. Shure, she's that kindheartid, she'd be civil even to a poor lame cratur like that. Miss Essie's that softheartid. It's the lame fut an' the shabby ould coat, God help him, and the half-starvedness iv the poor cratur, goes to her heart. She's as soft as butthermilk !”

“An' how is it, how is it, now, he can walk into the house when he plases? Answer me that, now !”

Mike's mouth went again agape. His face expressed respectful surprise at the question. He came a step nearer, with mysterious, confidential manner, which Kerrigan received haughtily.

“Shure, didn't you know, sur?” said Mike.

“Didn't I know what? What didn't I know?”

“Didn't you know that he comes off and on to write letthers for the masther an' copy dokkymints an' the likes iv thim things? Shure he gits a shillin 'a week ;

an' bedad I don't grudge it to him, for he wants it badly, the poor, harmless cratur !"

"Well, anyhow, she sames mighty frindly towards him."

"Luk here, sur," said Mike, "I'm not goin' to say anythin' for the sake iv makin' you think well iv me. It 'ud take a wiser man nor me to put the kybosh on you. But I'll tell you this now, an' there's ne'er another man in the townland I'd tell it to. It's only the other day Miss Essie was stannin' there where yir stannin' yirself this minit, an' I was here just as I am wid this bit iv a rake in me fist——"

"That's thrue enough," interrupted Kerrigan, "for I saw the both iv yiz through the gate."

Excited by this confirmation of his statements, Mike exclaimed :

"Shure, there y'are now ! I tould you I wudn't thry to disave you. Miss Essie was stannin' there, an' ses she, 'Micky,'—that's the way she talks to me—'Micky,' ses she, 'there's that fine polisman agin.' 'Where?' ses I, lukin' up, for I was rakin' the gravil. 'He's gone by now,' ses she. 'D'you mane Misther Kerrigan, miss?' ses I. 'Arra, who the mischief else shud I mane?' ses she, blushing as red as the sky beyant. An' dhin ses she to me, ses she, 'What's this his Christyin name is, Micky?' ses she. 'Well, miss,' ses I—wantin' to thry her like—'what 'ud you say to Pathrick?' ses I——"

"I was christened Cornaylius," interrupted Kerrigan, hastily. "What d'you mane be Pathrick?"

"Arra, wait a minit," said Mike ; "shure that's what I'm comin' to. 'What 'ud you think iv Pathrick?' ses I. 'Well,' ses she, 'it's a good Irish name,' ses she, 'but it's rather commin.' 'Well,' ses I, winkin' at her

like that, 'what 'ud you think,' ses I, 'iv Cornaylius?' ses I. 'Micky,' ses she, 'it's a bee-utiful name,' ses she. 'Is he raley called Cornaylius?' ses she. 'Bedad he is,' ses I, 'an' was called Cornaylius from the time he was med a Christian,' ses I. 'Well, Micky,' ses she, 'betwane you an' me,' ses she, 'the name's a fine name intirely, and it's a fine man that carries it!' ses she."

"She said that?"

"D'you think I'd tell you a lie?" said Mike, reproachfully. "Shure, don't I know who I'm talkin' to?"

"I'm glad she likes the name," observed Kerrigan, musingly, "iv Cornaylius."

It struck Mike that now was the time to improve his own position, so, emboldened by the constable's air of satisfaction, he laid his hand on Kerrigan's arm.

"But wait," said he, "a minit, sur. 'Micky,' ses she, 'is it thrue he's a harrd man?' ses she. 'Harrd?' ses I, 'what d'you mane?' ses I. 'I mane,' ses she, 'wud he arrist a man an' lock him up widout givin him a chance iv kapin' sthstraight—a man,' ses she, 'that he knew somethin' aginst?' 'Why d'you ax that?' ses I. 'Bekase, Micky,' ses she, 'I don't like a harrd man,' ses she, 'an' I don't belave he's a harrd man, for he doesn't luk like it,' ses she."

Constable Kerrigan put his hand to his brows.

"Yiv givin me an iday," said he, "an' I'll tell you what I'll do——"

Mike brightened.

"I'll arrist you," said Kerrigan.

Observing the ashen colour spreading in Mike's face, he added:

"She's gone up the town, an' whin she comes back I'll arrist you. Whin she sees you in custiddy she'll want me to let you out, an' I'll let you out. That'll

prove to her that I'm not as harrrd as people say. D'you undherstand me now?"

"Well, iv coorse," said Mike, "there's raisin in what you say. But cudn't you prove it on some wan else? You see I'd like you to have the matthter straight like. Now the pint is," said Mike, striving to keep his teeth from chattering as he attempted to read the constable's mind—"the pint is, what for shud you arrist me?"

"That'll do now. Lave it to me."

"But," argued Mike, "you see, here I am at honist labir, sobir and industhrius——"

"D'you mane to insinuate," demanded Kerrigan, "that I want you to break yir prowl?"

Giving a little hysteric laugh Mike shook his head from side to side.

"Well, well, iv coorse, I know yir not goin' to do that. But you see, sur"—dropping into serious argument again—"the pint's this, sur : Iv Miss Essie wants to know why I'm arristid, how am I to git out iv it? Don't you see, sur?"

The gate creaked. Kerrigan turned his head.

"Here she is!" he exclaimed.

At the same moment, seizing Mike, he shook him violently, shouting :

"Come an, now. I'll tache you to be makin' a disturbinse in the public thoroughfare. Risist me, is it?" He shook Mike so furiously that the rake fell, Mike striving to twist himself round with unacted terror. "Yid risist the polis!" shouted Kerrigan, dragging him helplessly by the collar. "I'll tache you, me fine fella, whether you or the law's the sthrongist!"

Mike's terror was not less real than that of Essie who stood amazed. Kerrigan pushed his victim before him.

"Why, what — what's this?" exclaimed Essie. "Mike!"

With the back of his collar twisted round his throat, Mike could only gaze at her in strangled silence. Kerrigan halted.

"What's this, miss?" he said, blandly. "Is that what you ax me?"

Without heeding these words Essie, still gazing at Mike, repeated his name in the same horrified tone.

"He's undher arrist," said Kerrigan, sullenly.

"Oh, Mike," exclaimed Essie, distressed, "what have you done?"

"Ax him," gurgled Mike, with purple face. "Ax the constible, miss. I—I don't know."

She turned inquiringly to Kerrigan.

"He's bin usin' impropir langwidge," explained Kerrigan, shaking him, "an' obsthructin' me in the lalag discharge iv me jooties."

"Oh, Mike, this is too dreadful," said Essie. "I must hurry in an' tell father."

She pressed on. Kerrigan, gazing furiously at Mike, said, in low voice:

"Why don't you ax her to be relased?"

"Miss!" yelled Mike. "Miss Essie, jule!"

She stopped, turning round.

"D'you want to spake to yir misthriss?" said Kerrigan, loudly. "Well, go an' spake to her!"

Mike, released for the moment, came with humiliated aspect towards his mistress, while Kerrigan looked after him with relentless scowl.

"Miss Essie, darlint," implored Mike, "will you ax him, for the love iv God, to let me out?"

"Mike," she replied, "I dare not."

He stepped back, speechless.

"Father," she explained, "would be angry with me for interfering. He is so strict about the law!"

"Shure, miss," groaned Mike, "you don't mane it! A wurrud from you, miss, 'ud be enough." He added, with intense pleading, "On me solim oath, miss, a wurrud from you is enough!"

She shook her head.

"That dreadful man, Mike," she said, in a low voice, "would not listen to me."

"Are you comin' now?" shouted Kerrigan, impatiently. "Come back, now!"

"Oh, Lord, Miss," cried Mike, "you won't let me be tuk for the sake iv a wurrud!"

"What did you do, Mike? What has he arrested you for?" asked Essie, bewildered.

"Bedad, I cudn't tell you, miss," returned Mike, desperately. "He tuk me for nothin' at all, but for pure divilmint!"

"Come back here!" shouted Kerrigan, advancing.

As Mike turned Kerrigan laid violent hands on him again.

"She won't say a wurrud for me," whispered Mike, hoarsely.

Kerrigan looked down at him, then up at Essie, who stood hesitating.

"Did you wish me, miss," he asked, "to let him out?"

"Oh, I should be very glad, indeed," said Essie, timidly, "if it would not be breaking any law——"

"Well, dhin, go!" exclaimed Kerrigan, releasing Mike with a thrust which sent him staggering. "An' now," he said, warningly, "don't get my hands on you agin, for, though I'm not a harrd man, I've me jooties to perforrum, and perforrum thim I will. That'll do

now. Yir young misthriss has axed me to let you go this time, and for her sake you kin go !”

“Oh, thank you,” exclaimed Essie, “very much, indeed !”

“Yir very welkim,” said Kerrigan, graciously.

Essie turned back again towards the house, Mike skulking close behind her, wiping his brows with the tail of his coat.

Kerrigan paced to the gate, saying to himself :

“‘Thank you, very much, indade !’ That’s good enough for me. Hould up yir head, Cornaylius !”

When he was outside the gate, he closed it. Resting his hand on the bars, he watched the retreating figures of Essie and Mike as they turned into the stable yard.

“There she goes,” he muttered, “the swate young cratur, wid her thrimblin’ heart an’ flutthrin’ buzzum ! There she goes, the daughter iv Sur Harbit O’Hara. ‘Thenk—yew—very—much—indade !’ The wurruds iv her, an’ the swateniss iv her voice ! Hould up yir head, Cornaylius Kerrigan, there’s money bid for you !”

CHAPTER XX

A WARNING TO CLARENCE

LITTLE Patsy Flanagan had become accustomed of late to the schoolmaster's red-rimmed eyelids in the mornings, but he had never before known him to spend the night on his bed without undressing. So, when Clarence rose, with aching limbs, and began to rub his knuckles into his eyes, Patsy stood staring at him, a cup of tea in one hand and the plate of bread in the other. Finally, when the schoolmaster looked heavily at him, Patsy turned to the table.

"Shure there's writin' here, sur," said he.

Clarence packed the closely-written sheets of paper into an envelope. Having directed it, he handed it to Patsy, requesting him to post it at once. Patsy instantly obeyed, running downstairs through the shop and into the street without his hat.

"Where are you scampin' too?" said a stern voice.

Patsy saw in front of him, with legs astride the pathway, the strong figure of Constable Kerrigan, whose hands gripped his belt. At his side dangled the dreaded sword.

"Plaise, sur," said Patsy, in extreme terror, "I'm only goin' to the post-office."

The constable, without taking his hands from his belt, looked down at the letter.

"What's that in yir hand?" he inquired.

"It's a letther, sur."

"Show it to me."

"Shure," said Patsy, hesitatingly, "it's Misther Clarence writ it an' sint me to post it——"

"Show it to me this minit, you young vagabind!"

Instantly handing forth the letter, Patsy stepped aside to whimper, rubbing the back of his hand into his eyes. Without moving Constable Kerrigan looked the letter over, then, holding it steadily out, he drew back his head with contracted eyelids.

"'Miss O'Hara, Red House Farm, Ballinabog.'"

This he repeated slowly several times, each time in so impressive a tone that Patsy had a vision of himself chopped up in small pieces by that sword. Therefore he cried out loudly. Constable Kerrigan looked him up and down.

"What are you cryin' for?" he demanded. "What's the matter wid you? Here's yir letther."

Setting his legs more astride the path, Kerrigan took a tighter grip of the belt, while he meditated with knit brows.

"Is yir father at home?" he inquired at length, so abruptly that Patsy gave a violent start.

"Oh no, sur, he's out."

"Where is he?"

"Oh, sur, plaise he's gone out. I dunno where he is."

"Is the schoolmather in his room?"

"Yis, sur."

"All right. Go an' post yir letther. Go on, now, an' don't let me see you galavantin' about the roads, or I'll take you up an' lock you in a dark hole undher the ground, where you won't git anythin' to ate but brid an'

wather, and where," added Kerrigan, with an awful stare, "yill be nibbled to death be rats. Off wid you now!"

Although Patsy's teeth chattered audibly at this threatened doom, when he had gone a few steps he turned back.

"Oh, sur," he exclaimed, "you won't kill me daddy?"

Kerrigan frowned down at the terrified little boy.

"Kill yir daddy?"

"Yis, sur," gasped Patsy, with a startled glance at the sword. "Oh, sur, don't kill him! Shure's he's me daddy. You—wont——"

"Arra, git along wid you!" exclaimed Kerrigan, interrupting the child's hysterics, "Iv yir father kinducts himself I won't touch him, but iv he doesn't kape in his propir place I'll kill an' ate him!"

"Aw no, sur! Aw no, sur!"

"Go on, now. Go an' post yir letther."

Kerrigan turned. Patsy, trembling in every limb, sobbed intermittently as his little feet trotted along the path. Despite his terror which made him weak, he ran back home as fast as he could, to warn his father in time before the constable could execute his threat. The fact that the constable had disappeared made the boy picture to himself the carnage already begun; that Kerrigan, in fact, was busy hacking his father to pieces.

He arrived home gasping and white, just in time to hear Kerrigan's heavy, deliberate steps mounting the stairs towards Clarence's room. When he entered the shop he heard a more familiar sound from the yard. It was only his father clearing his throat, but it was enough to give the boy's fainting heart renewed hope. There was no time to be lost. Kerrigan, thought Patsy,

had gone upstairs to kill the schoolmaster, after which, with the sword still reeking with Clarence's blood, he would descend to slaughter the general merchant. In less than a minute Patsy had rushed through the kitchen into the yard, where he flung his protecting little arms round his father's near leg. Mr. Flanagan was enjoying his morning pipe, resting his arms—in shirt-sleeves—on the wooden wall of the sty, lazily contemplating the pigs rooting in the straw. Patsy's sudden appearance moved him to turn his head slowly round.

"Well, Patsy, what's the matter? What—did yir mother bate you, alanna?"

"The polisman, daddy! The polisman!"

Turning a trifle pale, Mr. Flanagan put down his hand, groping for Patsy's head, which he gently stroked.

"What polisman, Patsy, agra? Who is he and where does he come from?"

"The polisman, daddy, that wants to kill you wid the big soord be his side, an' ate you. He's gone upsthairs to kill Misther Clarence."

Solemnly gazing at the pigs Mr. Flanagan pulled at his pipe without producing smoke. Patsy clung tightly to his father's leg.

"D'you mane Constable Kerrigan?" asked Mr. Flanagan, meditatively.

"Yis, daddy. You won't let him kill you, daddy?"

"Patsy, agra," said his father, slowly, "let go me leg. There's no polisman in the town or out iv the town iv Ballinabog 'll kill yir father, Patsy. Put that out iv yir head."

Having released the leg, Patsy stood gazing up, with long, muddy streaks stretching from his red eyes to his chin. His father, contemplating him, smoked thoughtfully in silence, for some time.

"He's gone upsthairst, you say?"

"Yis, daddy."

"Patsy," observed his father, searching in his trousers-pocket.

"Yis, daddy?"

"Here's a pinny for you. Go round an' tell Misther Gilligan I want to say a wurrud to him. To come," added his father, as Patsy turned to run off, "at wanst iv convaynient."

Patsy was out of sight in a moment. Folding his arms on the wall of the sty, Mr. Flanagan proceeded to finish his pipe.

Meanwhile Constable Kerrigan, having mounted the stairs, knocked loudly at Clarence's door, but, without awaiting permission, entered. Clarence, who had been bathing his face in a basin of cold water, turned round, in shirt and trousers.

"Kin I have a wurrud wid you?" asked the constable.

Having dried his face Clarence stood at the foot of the bed with the towel in his hand.

"I am getting ready for school," he returned. "Could you not call in the evening?"

"There's no time like the prisint," observed Kerrigan, looking round for a seat, but concluding that it was safer to remain standing. "I won't ditain you many minits. I just called to ax iv yid managed to knock out that letther I spoke to you about?"

"I couldn't do it," said Clarence, abruptly.

Thrusting out his head, Kerrigan eyed him keenly, holding himself tightly by the belt.

"You cudn't do it?" he repeated.

"I could not."

The constable stared hard at him again.

"D'you mane to say that a young man like you cudn't write a simple letther wid a few bits iv poethry in it? An' you a schoolmaster? Isn't it yir bisniss to write?"

"Not to write letters."

"Not yir bisniss to write letthers?"

After a close scrutiny of the other's face, Kerrigan drew his purse from the bosom of his tunic.

"I sippose," he said, before opening it, "you thought the price too small? Is that what's the matther wid you?"

"I wouldn't write such a letter," said Clarence, quickly, "not for a fortune."

After this effort he sat down on the end of the bed, while Kerrigan, having stared at him, shut up his purse with a snap.

"You wudn't do it?"

"No."

"No. But you kin write letthers for yirself!" exclaimed Kerrigan, shaking a fist suddenly in his face. "I know you, me fine fella. You kin write letthers for yirself, an' sind thim to be postid too!"

Clarence sat with parted lips, unable to collect his thoughts, while Kerrigan stood shaking his fist.

"You kin write letthers," shouted the constable, "to plaise yirself. I know you, me fine fella!"

"And what," gasped Clarence—"what is that to you?"

"What's that to me?" exclaimed Kerrigan. "What's that to me? That'll do now. It's ivrything to me. What d'you mane, what d'you mane be writin' letthers to Miss O'Hara? What d'you mane be it?"

At the mention of this sacred name Clarence had a sudden rush of blood to the head. Starting up, he trembled with impotent rage. He tried to speak, but

could not. He grasped the mantlepice to steady himself.

"Yill have to mind what yir about," observed Kerrigan. "I'll kape me eye on you! How dar you, how dar the likes iv you—a poor, starvin' schoolmaster like you—how dar you write letthers to Miss O'Hara?"

"Get out of this room," cried Clarence, furiously, "at once, or I will not be responsible for what——"

"That'll do now!" exclaimed Kerrigan. "None iv yir play-actin' wid me, me gay frind. Don't think yir goin' to hoodwink me. All I've to say now is—mind what yir about! Miss O'Hara's a frind iv mine, an' I'd have you know I'll have no trespassin' on her affeckshins. D'you hear, now? I give you timely warnin'!"

"Before God, if you do not go, I will kill you!" cried Clarence, wildly.

"That'll do now," said Kerrigan. "I see the state yir in, an' it confarms me suspishins. I've givin' you a wurrud in saisin. Kape in yir propir place. Yir a poor, wake, lame cratur, an' I don't want to hurt you: but yill have to kape in yir propir place, an' not forgit yirself. No more writin' letthers now to Miss O'Hara. No more iv that now!"

He brought his fist down on the table, which fell with its legs broken. After this demonstration, he frowned across at Clarence and abruptly left.

At the end of the stairs he found a tall, thin man, in a faded black coat, who, stretching forth a finger and thumb, grasped him lightly by the sleeve.

"I beg yir pardin," said the man, politely.

The constable, still excited, vaguely eyed this person, who, however, so far from appearing aggressive, returned a look of the most respectful courtesy.

"What d'you want wid me?" asked Kerrigan.

"Just a wurrud. I won't detain you a sicond," said the man. "I don't want to intrude on you in the laste. Have you a minit to spare, constible?"

"What's yir bisniss? What's yir name?" demanded Kerrigan, at the same time faintly remembering the thin, yellow face, with its grey whiskers.

"As for me name," was the mild response, "it's Joseph Gilligan, marchint tailir an' outfatter; an' I may say—if yill pirmit the libirty—the cloth in that tunic, sur, cudn't be bate in Ballinabog!"

"State yir bisniss," said Kerrigan. "I don't want to bandy wurruds wid you."

"Ixcuse me, constible," said Mr. Gilligan, insinuatingly. "I quite rekinise yir ifficial pision. I rispict it. I'm simply here in the pision iv a third party. There's another party here," turning to wave his hand gently towards the back door, "who marely wants to sittle a small account wid you in a frindly an' naburly way."

Looking over Mr. Gilligan's shoulder, Kerrigan saw, at the open door, Mr. Flanagan, in his shirt-sleeves, with his back turned. He was pensively gazing into the yard.

"That'll do, now!" exclaimed Constable Kerrigan. "I see what's yir game, now. I tell you, Misther Joseph Gilligan, you want lukin' affther. That's what's the matther wid you, me fine fella. An' I'll luk affther you!"

"Ixcuse me, constible," said Mr. Gilligan, anxiously, "I don't think you quite undherstand that me frind here an' meself aren't on for any rowdyism or quarrellin'. What me frind here wants is a quiet, ordherly sittlement in the cornir iv the yarrd or the back lane iv agreeible to you. Bakase there'll be no onlukers an' no disturb-

ance iv the public pase, an' the matther can be settled in a couple iv minits."

Nothing could be more persuasive than Mr. Gilligan's tone as he made this explanation, at the same time gently rubbing the constable's sleeve between his finger and thumb. But the effect was to increase Constable Kerrigan's indignation.

"Lit go me slave!" he exclaimed. "How dar you lay yir hand on me! I'll tell you what it is: I'll have the two iv yiz up for incitin' to a brache iv the pase. I've let yiz go on long enough now. But I'll settle yiz now."

With that he turned to walk down the hall to the front door, but Mr. Gilligan stepped after him.

"D'you mane to say," observed Mr. Gilligan, "that you dicline to mate me frind here in a frindly manner?"

Mr. Flanagan faced suddenly round.

"Joseph Gilligan," he exclaimed, "don't lit that man lave the house till I've done wid him."

"He's not goin'," responded his friend. "He's not the man to back out iv a little frindly discussion. Can't you give him time to make up his mind?"

Pausing with his hand on the front door, Constable Kerrigan shouted back to Mr. Flanagan:

"I know you, me man! I'll have you in the lock-up before twinty-four hours!"

"Kape back, Misther Flanagan!" exclaimed Mr. Gilligan, throwing his arms round his friend, who had rushed into the hall. "Yill spile ivrythin'. Shure, the constible's only jokin'. He's not goin' to lave without a frindly sittlemint."

Mr. Flanagan struggled with the tailor's winding arms.

"Lit me go, Joseph," he said. "Lit me go till I knock his head agin the wall!"

"All right!" exclaimed Kerrigan. "I'll rimimber that. Yiv settled yirself now! Yiv said enough now!"

He attempted to turn the handle of the door, but found some difficulty, seeing which Mr. Flanagan struggled all the more, shouting over Mr. Gilligan's head to the constable to show himself a man. He had just released himself, and was about to hurl himself on the constable, when there was a shrill cry of "Pathrick!" and Mrs. Flanagan appeared poised on the stairs. Mr. Flanagan became instantly subdued; and Constable Kerrigan, taking advantage of the pause, opened the door and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXI

MR. GILLIGAN SPREADS A SNARE

MRS. FLANAGAN remained standing on the top of the stairs. Her husband turned with open mouth to his friend.

"Have I scrubbed," said Mrs. Flanagan, "an' rubbed in this house from mornin', noon, to night, only to be med a laughin'-stock an' a jibe an' a jeer to the wurruld? Have I worn the flesh off me bones an' the clothes off me back to kape the roof over me child an' a bit in his mouth an' a shoe to his fut to be thrated as I'm thrated an' wurried an' scurried into me grave?"

Mr. Gilligan advanced to the foot of the stairs and looked up.

"I beg yir pardin, ma'am," he observed, submissively, "but I kin issure you, that there was not the slightest intintion to disthurb you in the laste."

"To be scouted an' flouted," said Mrs. Flanagan, "in me own house, which it has bin me pride an' ji to kape from bein' the sneer an' jeer iv the town. An' to have him fightin' an' murdherin' the polis undher me very eyes—a saint in glory wudn't stand it, an' it's dhrivin' me soon an' steady into me grave!"

"Is there any nicissity," suggested Mr. Flanagan, in a mildly argumentative tone to his friend, "to raise a

hue-an'-cry on the stairs ? That's all I wantid to know," he added, with increased mildness.

"Have I sthruv an' sorra'd," exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan, "an' wept the day I was borrun to have the sthairs thrown in me teeth as if I was only fit to be thramphled undher fut ! Have I——"

The door above opened. Clarence looked anxiously over the balusters.

"Is there anything wrong, Mrs. Flanagan?" he asked, gently.

"Bringin' changelins an' fairies undher the roof iv his child !" cried Mrs. Flanagan.

Clarence abruptly disappeared.

"That's a rale cruel thing to say !" exclaimed Mr. Flanagan. "I don't mind what's said to mesilf, but that's a rale cruel thing to say to a poor chap, an' I don't think it shud be said."

Taking his friend by the arm, Mr. Gilligan whispered :

"Lave her t' me. Go inside to the parlour there an' I'll jine you in a minit."

Mrs. Flanagan, sitting down suddenly on the top of the stairs, burst into tears.

"Ay," she cried. "He's ready enough to fight for anywan but his own flesh an' blood !"

Mr. Gilligan, with infinite tact, managed at length to appease, if not entirely subdue, her emotion, and the arrival of a customer left him free to rejoin his friend in the parlour. He found Mr. Flanagan in an attitude of dejection, seated beside the round table on which his arm rested ; moodily contemplating his boots. Without appearing to be conscious of his friend's unhappy condition, Mr. Gilligan exclaimed :

"Well, thanks be to God, the weather's settlin' down at last !"

Proceeding to light his pipe, he glanced through the window into the street.

"I don't mind," observed Mr. Flanagan, slowly, "mesilf; I'm used to it, though it's harrd enough all the same. But it was cruel harrd to that poor young schoolmather, an' it's only a woman 'ud have said it to his face."

"Don't be too harrd on the women, frind Flanagan," observed Mr. Gilligan, smiling playfully. "Min are always abusin' thim, but they can't git along widout thim. It's the same wid tailirs."

Mr. Flanagan turned his eyes for the first time towards his friend.

"I don't want to say a wurrud agin her," he observed, "for wid all her faults she's a harrd-workin', industhrious woman, an' I nivr give her as much as a back answer. But that poor chap——"

"Light yir pipe," suggested Mr. Gilligan, puffing at his own. "There's other matthers to talk about. Constible Kerrigan's a borrun coward."

Mr. Gilligan had seated himself, but Mr. Flanagan rose, agitatedly walked up and down, then struck his fist on the table.

"I'll be even wid that man yit!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Gilligan looked calmly up at him.

"An' how will you do it?" he asked.

"I dunno how I'll do it, but do it I will."

He struck the table again.

"There's only wan way," observed Mr. Gilligan, impressively.

"Any way or ivry way, I don't care how."

Taking his pipe from his mouth Mr. Gilligan gazed at him.

"There's only wan way," said he, "an' that way is as

I've tould you: 'Will you mate me wid a view to mathrimony, yours affeckshionately, Mary Doyle.'"

Folding his arms, Mr. Flanagan thoughtfully shook his head.

"I don't like anownimus letthers," he observed.

"Whether you like thim or whether you do not like thim," said Mr. Gilligan, solemnly, "there's only wan way an' that is: 'Will you mate me wid a view to mathrimony, yours affeckshionately, Mary Doyle.'"

Mr. Flanagan made no rejoinder, but seemed to reflect deeply as he filled his pipe; pausing from time to time to look up, then resuming the cutting of the tobacco.

"Is that the only way?" he asked.

"At the corner iv Murphy's field," explained Mr. Gilligan, deliberately, "on Sathurday nixt wid a view to mathrimony."

Having lit his pipe, Mr. Flanagan sat down, put his elbows on the table, rested his face between his hands, and while slowly smoking, gazed thoughtfully at his friend.

"There's a power iv brain about you, Misther Gilligan," he remarked.

"Lave me out iv the question," returned Mr. Gilligan. "There's only wan way, an' that's the way I min-tion."

"It's the anonymosity iv it," said Mr. Flanagan, reflectively, "that I don't like."

"Me frind," returned Mr. Gilligan, "whin yir dalin' wid a man like that you have to mind where yir walkin'."

Mr. Flanagan nodded.

"That's thrue enough," he assented.

"Therefore," said Mr. Gilligan, with a grave wink,

"there's nothin' for it but Mary Doyle anonymity or no anonymity."

For some time Mr. Flanagan smoked in silence, turning the matter over in his mind. Mr. Gilligan, similarly employed, said nothing, merely stooping once or twice to flick the dust off the end of his trousers. At length Mr. Flanagan, heaving a great sigh, rose, stretching his hand across the table.

"Joseph Gilligan," said he, "I give you free play in the matter. Whatever you do is the best to be done, for yir a man wid a head on his shoulders. What'll you take, Jo?"

Squeezing the proffered hand, Mr. Gilligan replied :

"I'll not disappoint you. I'll take a sup iv whiskey."

For the rest of the evening the two friends sat over their pipes and whiskey, discussing the letter which was to decoy Kerrigan to his doom. The elaboration of this work afforded them a quiet but satisfying pleasure. At length, when he rose to depart, with the letter fully blocked out on a large sheet of foolscap, Mr. Gilligan observed :

"I'll git me daughter, Judy, to write it out an' post it to-night. She writes a leedylike fist."

Next day the postman brought the letter to the constabulary barracks, where the score of men off duty had scattered themselves in search of shade under the garden trees : some stretched on the sward looking over the illustrated journals and others at tables playing chess or cards. The click of the billiard-balls came through the open window of the recreation room. The postman found Kerrigan with a straw hat low on his brows, nursing his knees under an apple-tree. When Kerrigan had read the letter he went to a part of the garden where, under heavily-foliaged trees, swung a

hammock. Here reclined a handsome young constable with his legs crossed, hands under his curly head, and a cigar held lazily in his lips. Kerrigan seized the nearest ankle.

"I want to ax you a question, O'Neill," said he. "You know all the girls in the town. Who's Mary Doyle?"

"There's a sarvint iv that name——"

"A sarvint! A sarvint wudn't have the impi-dinse——"

O'Neill sat up, steadying the hammock as it swung close to his companion's straw hat.

"Impidinse to what?"

"Write to a constab'lary man," explained Kerrigan. "I don't mind tellin' you. But don't say a wurrud about it."

"Honour bright! Wait a minit. It's the new bar-maid at the Commershil hotil, a nice ladylike girl."

"Is her name Mary Doyle?"

"Her name's Doyle, but I'm not shure about the Mary."

"That'll do for me," said Kerrigan.

At the appointed hour, having carefully brushed his uniform and polished his sword-handle, he sought Murphy's field. It was an ordinary pasture at the southern end of the town, separated from the road by a high hedge.

Having adjusted his belt and curled the ends of his moustache, Constable Kerrigan looked over the gate. In the near corner, under the shade of a beech, stood two men, whom he at once recognised as Mr. Flanagan and Mr. Gilligan. When they saw him Mr. Gilligan nodded genially and whistled to him invitingly. Mr. Flanagan with a calm, deliberate air, proceeded to turn

up his sleeves. Kerrigan stepped back from the gate as Mr. Gilligan, dressed in his best and wearing a new pair of kid gloves, approached smilingly.

"Won't you come in?" said Mr. Gilligan.

"Very well now," replied Kerrigan, "I'll have you too, me fine chap. I'll make you mind yir tailorin'. I know you now."

With his gloved hand on the top bar, Mr. Gilligan bent confidentially towards him, Kerrigan standing stiffly a few paces away gripping his belt.

"Don't lit us have any unfrindliness," suggested Mr. Gilligan, kindly. "It's just a little matther me frind an' you kin settle in five minits. There's no ill-feelin' in the matther, I asssure you. Will you be good enough to just step into the medda an' obleege me frind Mither Flanagan?"

For a moment Kerrigan stood unable to frame an answer to this politely-worded request; then, after a significant stare at Mr. Gilligan, he turned, pacing back towards the town.

"You white-livered coward!" shouted Mr. Gilligan over the gate. "Come back here, you—you——"

But the constable went on. At the end of the road he found a little boy pegging a top. It was Patsy Flanagan.

"Come over here!" exclaimed the constable.

Patsy's face was white as, with the string in his teeth, the top in his left hand, he crossed the road.

"What are you doin'?"

"Plaise, sur, only playin' peg top."

Taking him by the arm, Kerrigan swung him round.

"Don't let me ketch you playin' pegtop," said he, "or marrbles ayther. Mind now! Iv I ketch you playin' pegtop or marrbles in the sthreets I'll have all

the skin tore off yir body, beginnin' wid yir eyebrows an' down to yir toes. D'you mind me now? Are you listenin'?"

Patsy dropped down on his knees with uplifted hands.

"Oh, plaise, sur, don't take the skin off me! Oh, plaise, sur, don't!"

"Git up ow a that," said Kerrigan, thrusting at him with his foot, "or I'll jump on you. Tell yir father," he added, as Patsy rose with quick obedience, "that I'll Mary Doyle him an' his frind Gilligan too. D'you hear me now?"

"Yis, sur."

"What did I say?"

"That yill M-Mary D-Doyle me f-father, sur."

"What else?"

"Misther Gill-illigan, sur."

"Very well, now, don't you forgit to tell yir skulkin' father that. An' whin I git him—do you see that lamp-post down the sthreet?"

Tremblingly following the direction of the outstretched hand, Patsy, who saw nothing with his eyes full of tears, faltered:

"Yis, sur."

"I'll tie yir father's feet to that lamp and dhrag him out be the head till he's like an eel or a rope. D'you hear?"

"Oh, sur, shure you wudn't hurt me poor daddy!" sobbed Patsy.

Kerrigan had walked on. Patsy, wildly begging mercy for his father, followed. The constable turned abruptly, Patsy recoiling so suddenly that he almost fell.

"Iv you folly me," said the constable, furiously, "I'll

dhrag you be the heels to the station an' bury you in the black hole. Go back now to yir father an' his frind Gilligan an' tell thim I'll Mary Doyle thim. Away wid you now, an' don't let me find you playin' pegtop or marrbles agin !"

Patsy turning, ran away up the road without any other intention than to obey the general order to run away somewhere. At the same moment Sir Herbert O'Hara and his daughter appeared approaching. Drawing himself up, Kerrigan gravely saluted as they passed.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FAIRY CIRCLE

ESSIE with her father went along the road until they came to the skirts of the Bog. The air was clear ; the moon had begun to rise over the town. She suggested a visit to Clarence's grandfather.

As they approached the cabin they saw old Peter Maguire standing at the door, shading his eyes with his hand.

"Well, Maguire, and how are you?" said Sir Herbert.

Stepping close to them, old Maguire glanced back towards the cabin ; then, putting his hand to his mouth, said in a loud whisper :

"Whisht, yir honir, she's here!"

Essie took hold of her father's arm.

"Who's here?" asked Sir Herbert.

"Whisht! She's here. The Shan Van."

Sir Herbert felt Essie press close to him.

"Let us go back, my dear," said he.

"Oh no, father," she whispered, "I'm not afraid."

A bent figure, leaning on a stick, appeared in the doorway. It was the Shan Van. Old Maguire approached her with profound awe. Sir Herbert and

his daughter stood apart. Presently the old peasant turned excitedly to them.

"She'll show thim, yir honir, bekase iv the full moon, iv ye crass hir hand."

"Show whom? What?" asked Sir Herbert.

The old man glanced fearsomely about. He approached nearer.

"The fairies," he whispered. "Iv yir honir an' hir ladyship 'll come nigh the fairy sarkle yill see the schoolmaster diggin' for goold."

"Essie, my dear," observed her father, "the mist is rising. We'd better hurry back."

"No, father, please. Can it be possible?"

"Do you really wish, Essie, to see this old witch?"

She pressed his arm.

"You will take care of me, father."

"Will he crass her han'?" cried the Shan Van herself from the doorway. "She's not seen the sight iv tibacca for four-an'-twenty hours."

"Give her something, father."

"But, my dear," protested Sir Herbert, "if this old lady can do such wonders can she not get some of this gold Maguire talks about?"

The quick ears of the peasant caught the words. He looked up submissively.

"Fairy goold, yir wurship. It flies up the chimbly."

"Will he crass the han' iv the Shan Van?" cried the old woman, striking her stick impatiently on the ground.

Essie took a shilling from her purse.

"Give her this," said she to old Maguire. "Tell her we shall go and see the fairies——"

"But, my dear," exclaimed her father, "the mist! the damp! Really, you know, you are not too strong."

"Oh, we shall see what she can do," said Essie.

The two old people held a consultation, after which the Shan Van walked on ahead, biting the shilling, followed by old Maguire, mouthing with excitement. Wrapping a shawl about her head and shoulders, Essie held fast to her father's arm.

The Shan Van followed a cart-track which seemed to stretch to the moonlit horizon. Soon she struck into a footway with frequent turf-pits on either side. Presently halting, she turned. Old Peter Maguire hurried to her. She put her long hand on his face.

"I've anintid his eyes wid the spills an' tokins," she cried. "But here I dhraw the line for thim I don't anint, an' yir nayther to break the line be wurrud iv mouth or thread iv fut!"

She drew the end of her stick across the path. They watched her advancing towards a hillock, beyond which lay the fairy circle. Standing on this hillock, distinctly visible by the clear moonlight, the Shan Van, raising her stick, beckoned to old Maguire, who went to her with tottering limbs. They could see her press him down until he lay on his stomach, his fingers dug deep in the soil as he drew himself forward to look over the summit. They could only catch a few words, but observed the Shan Van bending to direct old Maguire's attention, with her outstretched stick, to the scene she was describing. After some minutes Sir Herbert began to stamp his feet and fidget.

"Maguire," he shouted at length, "we've had enough of this."

The Shan Van raised her arm.

"The spill's brokin!" she exclaimed. "I tould thim not to spake!"

Old Maguire rose to his feet with many groans.

When he returned to them Essie started at the sight of his bloodless face.

"Wake up, my man!" said Sir Herbert, slapping him on the shoulder, "you must guide us back. This young lady is catching cold."

The old peasant looked back at the Shan Van, who, seating herself on the hillock, was leisurely lighting her pipe. Then, touching his forehead, he trotted on in front. They followed. Presently he fell back to say, in a hoarse whisper :

"I saw him wid me own eyes!"

"What does he say, father?" asked Essie.

The old man glanced at her.

"The schoolmaster," he explained, "hidin' his goold in the earth."

"Why, my dear fellow," said Sir Herbert, "the hillock is not so big. If he was there we could have seen him."

The old man, halting again, looked from one to the other in silence for a moment.

"He was that size," he explained, measuring off the length on his forefinger.

When he had said this he looked impressively at them again.

"Father," whispered Essie, "let us get home."

"Lead on, Maguire," said her father, sternly.

Without a word he led them past his cabin to the outskirts of the bog, where he parted with them, mumbling a blessing as he touched his forehead.

Soon after they arrived home Essie went to her room, where she began her reply to Clarence's letter. She sat back from her desk meditatively biting the end of the pen. There was a knock at the door. Mrs. Grogarty put in her head.

"What is the matter?" asked Essie.

Sitting down close to the door, Mrs. Grogarty placed her hands on her knees, raised her eyes towards the ceiling, then moaned and rocked herself.

"The hevvins be me bed!" she exclaimed. "Aw, miss!"

"What is wrong?" exclaimed Essie. "Tell me at once or go away."

"Aw, miss, sure, he's frightened the whole lot iv us!"

Rising, Essie put one hand behind to grasp the table, pressing the other on her bosom as she stared at the old woman, who, to relieve her feelings, began to undo the strings of her nightcap.

"The schoolmaster, miss," she explained; "the changelin'. We've bin watchin' him for hours from the kitchin winda. Whisht, miss. Come over here. Don't let him see you."

Creeping to the window the old woman drew the blind aside. Essie, looking over Mrs. Grogarty's shoulder, saw the white road showing at intervals between the trees of the shrubbery.

"I see nothing," she remarked.

Stepping aside, but still holding back the blind, Mrs. Grogarty pointed out.

"Luk, miss, over there to yir lift. Shure, it's starin' up at yir winda he is. Don't lit him see you, miss, for the love iv God! He was there last night too, but, shure, I didn't like to disthurb you. Don't luk straight at him, fur he's the ayvil eye!"

After some time Essie saw Clarence Maguire leaning against a tree in the shrubbery. His eyes seemed fixed on the house; his face appeared very pale.

"What does he want?" whispered Essie. "My God, what does this mean?"

"He's puttin' the curse iv the changelin' on the house! Aw wurra, wurra, the day I ivir set fut in it! He's filled me poor ould bones wid aches an' pains till ivry jint in me's like rusty hinges. An' you, miss, that was so rosy an' plump, fadin' away undher the ayvil eye——"

Essie, who had sat down, rose suddenly to her feet.

"Who is there behind the door?" she exclaimed. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Shure, it's no wan at all, miss——"

"There is. I saw the door move. I shall call father——"

Putting up her hands, Mrs. Grogarty stepped in front of her mistress.

"Miss Essie, jule, it's no wan at all, only Biddy wid somethin' to give you. Come in, Biddy!"

The door opened. Biddy, staring at her mistress, stepped in.

"What do you want?" asked Essie.

Biddy glanced at Mrs. Grogarty.

"Give it to her," said the old woman.

Putting her hand into her bosom Biddy drew forth a small black silk bag which she handed to her mistress. Essie, having examined it, looked up.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Darlint, jule, asthore," said Mrs. Grogarty, affectionately, "it's a charrum that we brought from the Shan Van to kape the ayvil eye off you."

"A charm? But I don't believe in charms."

"Aw, miss, don't say that—don't say that! But shure, miss, whither or no, I've bin in yir sarvice

before you wor borrin, an' I ax you, miss, to put it undher yir pillar or hang it up over yir bid. Shure, miss, you won't refuse me!"

Hesitating, Essie looked at the bag again. It was made of good silk with a running cord.

"Well, if it pleases you, I'll hang it up somewhere."

Mrs. Grogarty fell on her knees with uplifted hands.

"Thanks be t' God!" she exclaimed. "It'll save you from the ayvil eye, for it's the bish iv charrums."

Essie, who had stretched the mouth of the bag, was looking curiously in.

"There's something inside," said she. "What is it?"

"It's a caul, miss," explained Biddy, with an air of triumph.

"A what?"

"It's the blessid caul iv an innicint babe," said Mrs. Grogarty, rising, "an' can't be bet in the way of a charrum——"

"How dare you!" cried Essie, flinging it away. "You wicked old creature! Go away! Leave me, both of you!"

Mrs. Grogarty, who had stopped to pick up the charm, was too amazed to move, but Biddy was already down the first flight of stairs.

"Won't you take the blessid charrum, miss?" said Mrs. Grogarty.

Stamping her foot, Essie pointed to the door in silence. Thrusting the bag into her bosom, Mrs. Grogarty went out, moaning all the way to the kitchen.

Essie retired to bed, but was unable to sleep until,

in the early hours, she heard the familiar footsteps of her father ascending to his room. When she rose, the quiet influence of morning restored her to calm reflection. Then, finishing her letter to Clarence, she gave it to Mike to post.

CHAPTER XXIII

MRS. GROGARTY AND THE FAIRIES

MIKE left the house by the stable yard with the letter wrapped in brown paper. At the entrance Constable Kerrigan stepped from behind the water-butt.

"What's that in yir hand?" he inquired.

"Saints presarve me!" exclaimed Mike, unpleasantly startled. "Is that where y'are? What the—shure, who'd have thought iv seein you there, sur! Faith, it's mesilf's rale glad to see you! An' how's ivry inch iv you?"

"What have you got in yir hand?" repeated the constable.

He held his belt tightly as he nodded at the letter. Mike turned the package about with an air of surprise. Then he thrust it indifferently into his breast.

"Shure, it's nothin' at all," said he. "Only a letther."

Kerrigan stretched forth a hand.

"Let me see it."

"Let you see it?" repeated Mike. "Shure, it's from the Mistriss; an' ses she, 'Micky,' ses she, 'hurry like a good boy, or yill be late for the post.' An', shure,

I don't know who it's to, or what it's for, for the divil a bit of me can rade or write. But iv I don't hurry to the post now she'll say, 'Micky,' she'll say——"

"Show me that letther!" exclaimed Kerrigan, sternly. "How dar you thry an' palaver me wid yir langwidge! D'you know who yir talkin to?"

"Do I know who I'm talkin' to?" said Mike, with an assumption of good-humour. "Faith I do indade, an' it's proud I am you condiscind to converse the likes iv me. The letther, is it? Iv coorse I'll show it to you, sur. An' shure an' why not? What does it matther about bein' late for the post? Can't she write another wan? An' isn't wan latther as good as another any day? Iv coorse I'll show it to you, sur. Where the divil did I sthick it, anyhow. Bad luk to it!"

Mike laboriously thrust his hand into every pocket but the right one; Kerrigan keenly watching him.

"Thry yir breast-pockit," suggested the constable.

"Aw!" exclaimed Mike, with an amazed smile as he drew it forth. "Shure, there it is! The clivirness iv you now, sur, to know where I stuck it, an' you talkin' all the time. Well, well! Iv there's a man anywhere about that 'ull git an in the Foorce I wudn't have to go far to search for him, bad luk—Plaise kape the paper round it, sur. Miss Essie ses, 'Don't dirty it, Mike, me bould boy, wid yer fingers,' ses she, 'bekase I know yiv bin cuttin' tibacca.'"

Kerrigan saw at a glance that the letter was addressed to Clarence. Holding it low in his palm he gazed thoughtfully at it, during which Mike, with his hands in his pockets, whistled softly as he stared at the tops of the trees down the walk.

"Have you——" began Kerrigan, and stopped.

Mike became instantly attentive.

"Have you," asked Kerrigan, reflectively, "any gum or paste in the house?"

Scratching his head, Mike looked at the ground.

"Gum—paste?" he repeated. "Faith, dhin," looking up, "I'm afeard there's not the taste iv ayther in the house, sur."

"Do they use starch at all?" asked Kerrigan.

Mike put his fingers to his chin. He thought Kerrigan was going mad.

"Starch—starch?" he repeated. "Starch?"

"That's the wurrd I used," said Kerrigan, angrily.

"Oh, yis. Iv coorse. Starch? Why not? Shure, now I come to think iv it, I wudn't be surprised iv Biddy—Starch? Shure doesn't Biddy use it for the washin'?"

"Well, go into the house an' bring me the laste taste iv starch," explained Kerrigan, "on a bit iv paper, an' say nothin' about it."

"Sartinly, sur," said Mike. "But are you done wid the letther, sur?"

"Don't mind the letther. Do as I tell you."

"Iv coorse. Sartinly."

Whistling brightly, Mike walked back through the yard. There, turning, he hid behind the gate, and peeped cautiously out to watch Kerrigan. The latter, secreting himself in the shadow of the water-butt, took a penknife from his pocket. As he opened it he looked up and saw Mike staring open-mouthed at him.

"What d'you want?" shouted the constable.

"Nothin', sur!" replied Mike, looking eagerly about. "I thought I hard an ould hen or somethin' layin' an egg. Starch? Iv coorse. Why not?"

The rest of his remarks were lost as he hurried into the house. Kerrigan, having walked to the gate to

watch him, returned to his hiding-place, where he neatly opened the letter with his knife, and read the contents.

"DEAR FRIEND,—I was surprised and very grieved at your letter. I am not, as you imagine, at all angry, but very, very sad about it. I do not know what to say, except that you are right in saying how hopeless it is. . . . Yes, it is quite, utterly impossible. I am sorry to write that, but it is so. You say I am not responsible. I am glad to know that. I should be indeed deeply grieved if I thought you had misunderstood my friendliness. Pray do not write to father. I beg of you not! He has enough troubles already. I know you will respect my wishes. Can you not come as before to see him? You need not see me, at least, until you can do so as a friend; for I value your friendship for father's sake and my own.

"ESSIE O'HARA."

Having read this twice, Kerrigan returned the letter to the envelope. Mike appeared. The bit of starch which he carried on a piece of paper was scarcely whiter than his own face when he understood that Kerrigan had read the letter. He felt that if it contained any affectionate terms towards Clarence the parole would summarily cease.

Dipping the tip of a finger in the starch Kerrigan used it to reclose the letter which he handed back.

"What I can't understhand," he said, "about it is—Come on, what are you starin' at? Come and post yir letther. I'll walk as far as the gate wid you."

Mike heaved a sigh of relief as he respectfully fell into step beside the constable.

"What I can't understhand," continued Kerrigan, "an' I think it's a mighty quare thing, that yir misthress shud get you to post that letther."

"Shure, sur, there's no wan else. Biddy's washin' and the ould woman's scourin' the pots."

"That'll do, now. That's not what I mane at all. Clarence Maguire lives within a few doores iv the post office. Why cudn't she get you to bring it to him an' save the pinny?"

"Luk at that, now," exclaimed Mike, admiringly, "I nivir thought iv that! Bedad, it's a quare thing intirely."

"I don't understhand it at all, at all," said Kerrigan, musingly, "an' there's few things I can't make out."

"Begor, what you don't know," said Mike, "isn't worth knowin'."

"That'll do now. Did you find the letther he wrote to her as I tould you?"

"No, sur. There now; I tell you, plain an' dacent, no, sur, I did not."

"An' why not?" asked Kerrigan, turning on him. "Didn't you sarch for it?"

"I sarched the house from top to bottim, an' the devil a sign iv a letther cud I see anywhere."

"Did you sarch her room?"

"I did, sur."

"Where does she kape her letthers?"

"Well, sur, she kapes thim, as far as I kin make out, in her disk in her bedroom; but where she kapes the kay, the sorra know I know."

"You must find it," said Kerrigan, emphatically, "an' iv you don't, I'll sarch along wid you."

They had reached the gate. But Mike stopped to stare at his companion as he made this statement.

"What are you lukin' at?" said Kerrigan, "go an' post yir letter now."

Without a word Mike obeyed, while the constable paced thoughtfully in the opposite direction.

Essie, who had been standing at a front window marvelling at Mike's non-appearance, heard Biddy behind her.

"Are you there, Miss Essie?"

Essie turned. Biddy had the backs of her hands turned up to her shoulders.

"Shure, Missis Grogarty's tuk awful, miss, an' wants to go to bed, an' what am I to do wid her?"

"What's the matter with her?"

"Ah, shure, miss," said Biddy, lowering her voice as she glanced towards the arm-chair where Sir Herbert was dozing, "she ses it's the fairies are puttin' charrums on her."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Essie.

Biddy remained silent.

"I'll come this moment," said her mistress.

When, followed by Biddy, she went down to the kitchen, she found Mrs. Grogarty beside the fireplace, moaning and rocking herself.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Essie.

Mrs. Grogarty kept her eyes tightly closed.

"Aw, miss! aw, miss!" she said.

"Come, come," said Essie, gently, "don't give way like this. Is it rheumatism?"

Slapping her knees, Mrs. Grogarty rocked herself and groaned again.

"Rheumatism?" said she. "Aw, glory be to God, me last hour has come!"

"Wud you like to go to bed, ma'am?" asked Biddy, bending down.

"Bed?" said Mrs. Grogarty. "Take me away. I'm dyin', I'm dyin'!"

"Come, Biddy," said Essie, "we'll get her to bed."

They assisted her to her feet, helping her inside to the little room, where they laid her gently down on the bed. She called on all the saints in glory to come to her assistance.

"Would you like a doctor?" asked Essie.

"Dochter, achushla? Aw, iv I only had the Shan Van!"

"What does she say?" asked Essie of Biddy, who was standing at the foot of the bed.

"She ses she'd like to see the Shan Van, miss," explained Biddy. "You know, miss, the fairies are terribly afeard iv the Shan Van. They wudn't come within miles iv her!"

"Aw, the Shan Van, where is she?" exclaimed Mrs. Grogarty. "She wudn't let me be tortured be him! It's all his fault in comin' here!"

"What is she talking about now?" asked Essie, reddening a little.

"She's wandherin' a bit in her mind," replied Biddy, evasively. "I think a dhrop iv whiskey, miss, 'ud do her a lot iv good."

"Go upstairs and get it," said Essie, sitting down on a box beside the bed.

"I've lived wid the O'Haras," said Mrs. Grogarty, with her eye tightly closed, "nigh forty year, and I nivir saw a changelin' next or nigh thim till he come here. An' now he won't let me alone bekase I've stuck to the family nigh forty year. Aw, the Shan Van! the Shan Van!"

The whiskey quieted the invalid until she slept. During the night, however, she started loudly groaning

again, when the house was quiet. Essie awakened from sleep, put on her cloak and went down. The old woman heard her enter.

"Light a candil, Miss Essie," she exclaimed, "for the love iv God, an' don't lave me, achushla. Sit beside me an' hould me hand!"

Until morning Essie sat beside the bed in her cloak, holding the twitching hand of the old woman, who prayed and cursed changelings at intervals.

During the following day Mrs. Grogarty was somewhat better, but at night she fell ill again. Essie sat up as before. Next day the doctor arrived and prescribed for the old woman. The same night Biddy offered to keep watch.

Before going to bed, Essie went to bid her father good-night. He was in his chair peacefully dozing. Her soft kiss on his forehead roused him.

"Are you going to bed, my child?"

"Yes, father. It is eleven o'clock."

"It is time for you to get a sleep. How is the poor old woman? Poor creature! She has served us long and faithfully. How is she to-night?"

"She was asleep when I left her. The doctor gave her a sleeping-draught."

"Ah, that's right. Her groans last night were fearful. Good-night, dear. Sleep well!"

"Good-night, father."

She put her arms across his chest as she bent down to kiss him again. Feeling her tears on his face, he looked up.

"Why, my dear, what is wrong? You are crying. You are unnerved!"

"Father, don't you know—to-night?" faltered Essie.

"What about to-night, dear child?" he asked, sitting up bewildered.

She laid her head on his breast with her arms about his shoulders.

"To-night, father, seven years ago—don't you remember?"

There was silence for a moment. Sir Herbert slowly bent his face till it touched her hair.

"Ah yes, my child," he said, brokenly, "your sainted mother died this night, seven years ago."

Essie remained sobbing softly with her face bowed.

"You lost," said he, solemnly, "an ideal mother, and I the priceless companion, the sympathiser, the help-mate of my manhood. I recall her memory, my child, here to-night, to ask her to forgive me for having embittered the closing years of her precious life!"

"No, father, no!"

"My child, it is part of my punishment. To know and to recollect, that when I should have been saving, I squandered; when I should have been husbanding my resources I was drifting to financial destruction. For what? To please myself and my friends. My friends? Where are they now? Ah! your gentle mother, nurtured in every luxury, I dragged her down! I ask her to forgive me if she can hear my voice or read my heart. It is too late, too late!"

"Father, dear father, I was wrong to recall these things!"

"No, Essie, you were right to remind me that to-night, seven years ago, we lost her, you and I—Leave me, Essie; go to bed my child and sleep!"

"Father, do not speak like that!" sobbed Essie; "you will break my heart!"

"God forgive me, what a misspent life!" exclaimed

her father. "Go to bed, Essie, you are as white as a sheet. Kiss me!"

She obeyed, and upstairs, when she went to bed, cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV

BURGLARS

SIR HERBERT, having indulged for an hour in self-reproach and whiskey, slumbered in his chair. Downstairs in the little room behind the kitchen Mrs. Grogarty, overcome with the sleeping-draught, snored peacefully, while Biddy, with a shawl about her shoulders, slept at her post.

It was close on morning, but still profoundly dark, when two men stood peering in at the door where Sir Herbert reclined in his chair. These two men were Kerrigan and Mike, both wearing black crape masks. Kerrigan, wearing an old top-coat of Mike's over his uniform, carried a bull's-eye lantern.

"He's fast aslape," he whispered.

Cautiously stretching forth his hand, he gently closed the door.

"Be the hoel in me coat," muttered Mike, "I don't like this bisniss at all at all!"

Kerrigan put his hand over the other's mouth.

"Whisht!" said he. "It's not worse nor moon-lightin', is it? We're not goin' to shoot any wan in the legs. Go on now before me an' show the way to Miss O'Hara's bidroom. I'll kape me eye on you."

Mike slowly groped his way up the dark stairs by the wall. His companion, holding on to the tail of his coat, followed closely.

"Here's the room," whispered Mike at last.

"Stand here dhin," said Kerrigan, in the same tones, "an' do senthry jooty. I won't kape you long. Where's the disk her letthers are in?"

"On the table beside her bed," said Mike, repressing a groan. "For God's sake, sur, don't wakin the young lady!"

Without replying, Kerrigan slipped into the room, where he stood in the darkness for some moments listening intently. He heard nothing but Essie's breathing. Carefully opening his bull's-eye he threw the beam swiftly round the room. For a second it glanced on the bed, revealing Essie with her hair disarranged on the pillow, her arm flung over the clothes and her nightdress open at the throat. Then the beam turned steadily on the dressing-table. Creeping forward without a sound, Kerrigan placed the lantern on the table. Opening the desk, he searched the contents. While he was examining some letters, Essie, moaning, turned in the bed. Instantly shutting off the light, Kerrigan remained with his hands on the table, his face turned towards the bed, listening. Satisfied that she was still asleep, he opened the lantern again. Taking several letters, he thrust them into his pocket. The door was softly moved. Mike, putting in his head, whispered tremulously:—

"Are you comin', sur?"

Kerrigan made no reply. Taking up the lantern he turned it on the bed, revealing Essie's face and shoulders. The strong light wakened her. Instantly she sat up, in time to see the man with the crape mask.

She uttered scream after scream, while the two men fled rapidly down the stairs.

Awakened by his daughter's terrified cries, Sir Herbert sat upright a moment to listen. He heard a noise as of wind rushing past his door. Still Essie called him. The women below also began to shriek. Sir Herbert, seizing his lamp, hurried from the room.

"I'm coming, darling!" he cried, loudly. "I'm coming!"

Upstairs, as he entered, holding the lamp aloft, he saw Essie grasping the bedclothes. She stared wildly at him. Placing his lamp on the table he threw his arms round her. By degrees her hysterical terror subsided. She clung to him as she told him that she had been awakened by a man masked at her bedside.

"Get up, darling, and put on your dressing-gown," suggested Sir Herbert. "Do not be afraid. I am with you."

"Listen!" cried Essie, wildly. "Father! What is that?"

Her father turned his head towards the door.

"What—what?" said he.

"That noise. Oh, father!"

It was the clamouring of the women downstairs calling for their door to be opened.

"The servants," explained Sir Herbert. "Do not be alarmed, my child. Be firm. I shall go——"

"No, no, father, don't leave me! Don't!"

"There, darling, I shall not. Where is your gown?"

He found it in the wardrobe. She put it on, with great difficulty, as she was trembling violently. He led her, with his arm round her shoulders, down to the sitting-room. The women still continued shrieking downstairs, but Sir Herbert could not go down because

Essie clung to him. Presently some one knocked loudly at the hall door. Essie, as she heard it, uttered a scream.

"Why, my love," said her father, "it is some one to assist us."

Opening the window he thrust out his head, demanding who was below. A voice replied from the doorstep :

"It's me, Sur Harbit ; Constible Kerrigan ! Is there anythin' wrong here ?"

"Thank God !" exclaimed Sir Herbert, looking reassuringly at Essie. "See, my darling, what it is to have police ! Do not be afraid now. I shall let you in," he shouted down to Kerrigan. "Just wait a moment."

"All right, sur," replied Kerrigan.

Essie was not afraid now. She stood near the open window, while her father, hastening downstairs, let in Constable Kerrigan. They came back together. Kerrigan, as he entered the room, saluted Essie. The sight of the uniform restored her more than all her father's words.

"What's wrong, sur ?" asked Kerrigan, turning to Sir Herbert.

"My daughter," returned Sir Herbert, "was wakened by a man with a mask in her room. She may have been dreaming——"

"No, no, father !" interrupted Essie.

"Well, anyhow," said her father, "she saw, or believed she saw, a man in her room. The women downstairs——"

He stopped. The two women were frantically beating on the door, calling to be released.

"It appears to me," said Kerrigan, as he heard them,

"the faymales have bin locked in. That, sur, 'ud verrify the young lady's statement."

"Truly, truly," exclaimed Sir Herbert. "I should have thought of that."

Essie uttered a stifled cry as Kerrigan deliberately drew his sword. He smiled at her.

"Don't be afeard, miss," said he, "there's no wan 'ud hurt a hair iv yir head while I'm on the primissis. Now, Sur Harbit, wid yir permisshin, I'll relase the faymales downstairs, an' they kin come to their mis-thriss; an' manewhile I'll sarch the house from top to bottim. Kin I have a light?"

Essie lit a candle, which she gave him. While he went downstairs, Sir Herbert remained with her.

Kerrigan, as he descended, shouted:

"Hould yir whist, wimin! I'm comin' down t' yiz!

"Ah, my dear," observed Sir Herbert as he closed the window, "what should we do without our guardians of law and order? Thank God, we have the police still left to us in this distracted country!"

In a short time Kerrigan returned, driving the women before him. They had been locked in, but he had found the key on the floor outside the door. Mrs. Grogarty's rheumatism had been conquered by fright, but she still trembled so violently that her mistress and Biddy had to devote themselves to her. Meanwhile the constable, carrying his drawn sword, searched the house, followed closely by Sir Herbert holding a lamp aloft. There was not an article of furniture that the constable did not examine, not a dark corner that he did not explore. Sir Herbert was satisfied.

They returned to the sitting-room, where they found Mrs. Grogarty kicking in the arm-chair, Essie with Biddy consoling her.

She declared that it was the work of the fairies and "that changelin'."

"Well, sur," observed Kerrigan, "there's no sthranger on the primisses."

"No! Your search has proved that!" assented Sir Herbert. "I shall send a special report and recommend you in the strongest possible terms."

"Thank you, sur!"

Sir Herbert advanced to the group at the chair.

"Essie, my love," said he, "the constable and I have made a complete and thorough search. We found your dressing-table somewhat disarranged, but nothing more. Nothing has been taken."

Essie, who was kneeling beside Mrs. Grogarty, chafing the old woman's hands, looked up gratefully at her father.

Kerrigan put his hand to his forehead.

"Wan momint, sur," said he. "Haven't you a sarvint-boy in yir stables?"

"Truly, truly," assented Sir Herbert. "What of him?"

"Doesn't it sthrike you, sur, as quare," suggested Kerrigan, "that he should have slept through all this hubbub?"

"Upon my word, now that you mention it," said Sir Herbert; "but"—checking himself—"on second thoughts, what object—— He has proved himself an honest, industrious young man——"

Kerrigan raised his hand.

"I don't want to say a wurrud agin him," said he, "but jooty is jooty. Wid yir pirmission, I'll step outside an' ax him a question or two."

"Certainly, certainly," assented Sir Herbert.

Saluting again, Kerrigan left. While he was gone

Mrs. Grogarty had a fresh attack of fairy terror mingled with rheumatism. Essie and Biddy had to hold her arms, while Sir Herbert himself sympathetically stroked her forehead with a damp handkerchief.

Presently Constable Kerrigan came back. He held Mike firmly above the left elbow, pushing him before him. Mike, with his disengaged hand, rubbed his eyes until they were red, as if to rub the sleep out of them. He had an uncertain, frightened expression which surprised Sir Herbert, who sat down to hear evidence.

"Now, yir wurship," exclaimed Kerrigan, "I found this young man aslape or purtindin' to be aslape on the hay in the loft beyant. Now dhin"—giving Mike a sudden shake to rouse him—"tell his wurship whither you wor aslape or awake."

Mike at first looked submissively at the constable, then turned a dogged face to his master.

"Fast aslape," he replied.

"That'll do now," said Kerrigan; "you wor aslape. Very good. Now, sur, tell his wurship where you wor at wan o'clock this mornin'."

"Aslape," replied Mike.

"That'll do now," continued Kerrigan. "Hould up yir head an' luk at his wurship."

He gave Mike's arm a jerk. Mike, raising his dogged face, gazed remorsefully towards Sir Herbert, who sat with his legs crossed, one arm thrown over the back of his chair.

"Now, sur, tell his wurship——"

"Excuse me one moment, constable," said Sir Herbert, raising his white hand. "I must tell you," he added, addressing Mike, "that I have no suspicions whatever about you——"

"Shure, I know that, sur," growled Mike.

"Hould yir tongue, sur, while his wurship's ad-dhressin' you!" exclaimed Kerrigan.

"None whatever," continued Sir Herbert, "but the constable here, in pursuance of his duty, considers it necessary to question you relative to events of which, I presume, he has informed you. That's all."

"Now, sur," said Kerrigan, sternly, to Mike, "yiv heard his wurship. Hould up yir head an' answer the questions that I put t'you. Did you hear no disthurbanse betwene the hours iv twilve an' wan o'clock?"

"I did not."

"You did not. Are you a sound slaper?"

"I am."

"Yir a sound slaper. Very well. Tell his wurship whin you wint to bed last night."

"When I felt slapey."

Kerrigan shook him violently.

"Answer the question, sir!" he exclaimed. "Don't thrifle wid his wurship. Tell his wurship at what hour you wint to bed."

"Begor, I don't know what hour it was," answered Mike, morosely. "I didn't luk at the clock."

"An' why not?"

"Bekase there wasn't wan to luk at."

"Very well. Was it four o'clock in the daytime?" asked Kerrigan.

Mike turned a look of surprised reproof at him, to which Kerrigan replied by another jerk of the arm.

"Don't luk at me, sur. Luk at his wurship. Was it five o'clock, dhin?"

"Faith, I was harrd at wurruk, swapin' the stabil at five o'clock."

"That'll do now. Was it six o'clock?"

"No."

"Was it sivin?"

"Later nor that—it must have bin nigh tin."

Kerrigan looked at Sir Herbert with an air of triumph.

"About tin, yir wurship. We've got him right at last. Now, sur, tell his wurship at what hour you fell aslape?"

"At what hour I fell aslape?" repeated Mike, wondering. "Shure, I dunno what hour I fell aslape. Shure no man cud tell that!"

"Don't thrifle wid his wurship," said Kerrigan, sternly. "Rimimbir, yir on yir oath——"

"Constable," said Sir Herbert, rising, "I think there is little use pursuing this inquiry. I acquit this young man of all complicity in the affair."

"Very well, yir wurship," returned Kerrigan. "You hear," he added to Mike, "what his wurship ses. You kin go now, but take care you don't git into my hands agin. Mind, now! I'll kape my eye on you!"

Mike opened his mouth once or twice to make an observation, but Kerrigan gave him a thrust with his elbow in the chest, saying sternly—

"That'll do now. Go back to yir sthraw!"

Mike accordingly left. Sir Herbert, who had been speaking to his daughter, now looked up.

"I think, constable," said he, "we can now safely dispense with your kind services, which, I can assure you, will be duly reported at the proper quarters."

"Thank you, sur," returned Kerrigan.

"We shall, therefore," said Sir Herbert, "say good morning, for"—waving his hand towards the window—"day has already begun to break."

"Yir wurship," said Kerrigan, "I'm obliged t'you for yir kind rimarks, ispecially, sur, as I'm a man that manes to git an in the Foorce——"

"A very laudable ambition," assented Sir Herbert, wearily.

"An' yir kind rimarks," continued Kerrigan, "about commindin' me to headquarters I'll not forgit. I'll kape me eye on the primisses now that I find there are marraudhers about, an' I'll see that no harrum happins to you or yir daughter."

"I am sure," said Essie, resting her hand on the top of the arm-chair where Mrs. Grogarty lay collapsed, "I am very much obliged to you too. I don't know what we would have done without you. I was terribly frightened; but the moment I saw you I felt quite brave."

Kerrigan had listened to these sweet words with a pleased smile.

"Very good, miss," he observed. "Don't lit any further fear disthract yir fluttherin' buzzum. I wish you good mornin', an' I wish yir wurship good mornin'!"

He saluted and departed by the hall door. When he had descended the steps he stood looking up towards the window. At that moment Essie pulled up the blind to refresh herself with the brightening sky.

"There y'are," muttered Kerrigan, "come to have another luk at me. 'The momint you saw me you felt quite brave.' Did you, me darlint? That's good enough for me. Hould up yir head, Cornaylius!"

And when Essie left the window to return and minister to the wants of Mrs. Grogarty, Kerrigan held up his head as he marched proudly to the gate.

CHAPTER XXV

KERRIGAN'S EYE

IN the police station the constable read Clarence's letter. Ignoring its hopeless spirit, he considered it a love-letter of the most passionate kind. At the first opportunity he returned to the Red House, ostensibly to make further inquiries relative to the attempted burglary. Although it was four o'clock in the afternoon Sir Herbert had not yet risen. But Essie sent down word to Biddy that she would be happy to see him.

When he entered Essie was knitting a shawl for Mrs. Grogarty.

"I am very glad you have come," said she. "It gives me an opportunity to thank you again for your great kindness."

Kerrigan did not relax the severity of his face as he remained standing a pace inside the doorway.

"I'm glad I was iv sarvice t'you," he responded, "an' I wud do more'n that to steady yir fluttherin' buzzum."

Though surprised at his words Essie made no remark on them, but, resuming her work at the shawl, invited him to be seated.

"Well," said Kerrigan, looking about hesitatingly, "I will. This chair luks a bit sthronger nor the rest. I come more or less on bisniss."

She looked up brightly from her knitting.

"Sir Herbert spent most of the day writing yesterday, writing about you to the Castle. I hope it will get you promotion."

He pulled his belt round to get the sword to rest across his thighs.

"I hope it will," he responded, "for this is wan iv the wurst towns in the counthry for a man that wants to get an in the Foorce. There's nothin' doin'. A man like me might as well be in the Sahara disart. But, wid good luk, I'll manidge to get an even in Ballinabog. I mane to get an, an' I will!"

"That is how one knows a really clever man," said Essie, "to win one's ambition in spite of circumstances!"

"There y'are now. That's the kind iv man I am. An' thim that I take a fancy to I mane to lift up wid me."

This was said in so confidential a manner that Essie, taking no interest in his private concerns, maintained silence. Kerrigan bent forward with his hands gripping his knees.

"From constible," said he, "to sarjint, from sarjint to head constible, from head to disthricht inspectir, from disthricht inspectir to county inspectir, an' from that—I dunno how high I may go. There's no tellin'. But I mane to go as high as I kin."

"I hope you will."

"There now, that's right. That's the way to talk," said he; "I like a persin to spake out."

Essie stopped her work, lifting her head to listen, with a knitting-needle against her chin.

"That is father stirring upstairs," she remarked. "You want to see him, I know. I shall go up and tell him you are here, as I am sure you have not much time to spare."

As she rose Kerrigan slowly rose too, putting up his hand.

"Wait a momint," said he; "I've a wurrud for yir privit air besides. I've here a letther"—he took it from his sleeve—"that I found in yir room whin I was sarchin' it wid yir father, an' this letther——"

"Did you read it?" asked Essie, amazed.

"Did I read it? Iv coorse I read it," he answered, frowning at her. "How did I know but it might have bin dhropped be wan iv the thramps an' be a clue to his arrist!"

"Oh, I see," returned Essie. "But it doesn't matter. I daresay it is of no importance. Give it to me."

He stared from the little hand as she held it out, to her ingenuous face.

"This letther," he explained, "is, in ifficial coorse, to be returned to the ownir iv the house."

"Oh, to father," said Essie, smiling at his manner. "Very well. That will be all right. I hear him coming."

"I'd give it t'you—" said Kerrigan, hastily, "don't go for a minit till I tell you this—I'd give it t'you on wan condishin——"

"Condition?" she repeated. "What do you mean, constable?"

"This letther——" began Kerrigan, as he looked at it in the palm of his large hand.

Essie recognised it.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I know who it is from. I do not wish father to see it. Give it to me, please."

This command was so peremptory, Essie accompanying it by a commanding gesture of her hand, that Kerrigan quickly concealed the letter up his sleeve.

"That'll do, now," said he. "There's only wan way you kin get that letther. You must promise me to have

no further daylins wid Clarence Maguire. I'm surprised at you—I am indade surprised at a dacent young lady like you lettin' yirself down to a commin schoolmasther, an' a lame, starved cratur too. I don't want to be too harrrd on you, but I don't like it, an' I won't have it."

The only reply that Essie could make to this was a profound stare of amazement. Once or twice her lips parted as if to speak. She had not recovered the sense of outraged feelings when Sir Herbert entered. She could not even return her father's greeting, but merely indicated Kerrigan's presence with a wave of her hand as she passed out.

"Ah, constable," exclaimed Sir Herbert, "I am glad to see you. I hope you have got some news for me. You will be glad to hear, no doubt, that I have written to the Castle——"

"Yir daughter informed me to that iffect," interrupted Kerrigan.

"Ah, is that so? Well, be seated. I hope to hear some good news about you soon."

"Well, sur, a great dale dipinds on what you say. Iv coorse, as a sayniur magisthrate, you kin do a lot."

"I shall do everything in my power."

"I thank you agin. But I won't detain you long now, sur, as me time's up. I came in the coorse iv me ifficial jooties to give you this. I found it in yir daughter's room the night we sarched the house."

"Oh, a letter!" observed Sir Herbert, taking it.

"I thought at the time it was somethin' dhropped be the thramp as I found it on the flure," explained Kerrigan, closely watching Sir Herbert's face, "but it's nothin' iv the kind, as yir wurship may see."

"Oh, it's one of my daughter's letters," said Sir

Herbert, throwing it on the table. "It's of no importance. What pleasant weather we're having!"

"As for the letther bein' iv no consequence," said Kerrigan, anxiously, "that's a matther for you, sur. In the coorse iv me jooty I was ibliged to rade it. It's from Clarence Maguire, an' about as bould a letther for a lame-footed thraneen to write to a young lady like yir daughter as ivir I saw."

Sir Herbert, with knitted brow, glanced from the speaker to the letter.

"Well, my good man," said he, after a pause, "I am sorry official necessity caused you to read Miss O'Hara's correspondence. Your private opinions on the matter do not concern me. You have done your duty. That is all that is required from you."

"I've bin in the Foorce long enough to know me jooty," said Kerrigan, stiffly, "wid due rispict to yir wurship."

"Yes, of course," said Sir Herbert, nodding. "I quite understand. Good-day!"

Kerrigan saluted and departed. He had scarcely left the room when Essie came downstairs. As she entered her father turned moodily from her.

"He's gone, thank goodness!" said Essie. "Father, he left this letter." She took it from the table, holding it up. "Have you read it?"

"I never read any correspondence but my own," said her father, coldly.

"But I wish you would read this, father."

Turning to face her, Sir Herbert placed his hands behind his back.

"The constable has informed me sufficiently of its contents," said he. "It is with deep pain, Essie, that I have learned that you—my daughter—one of the

O'Haras—should have so far forgotten your position as to receive communications of such a nature from a— from a common person.”

“But I could not avoid receiving it,” returned Essie, flushing. “It came through the post.”

“Why, when you read it—why did you not return it?”

“Oh, father, Mr. Maguire would have been so hurt.”

“What, madam,” exclaimed Sir Herbert, “are the feelings of a common schoolmaster to weigh—to be put before the dignity of Miss O'Hara? Can I believe my ears?”

“Father, don't be angry with me!”

“Angry! I am pained. I am grieved. I am humiliated. Yes, I am humiliated. Good heavens! has our descent, has our poverty then, made you forget our position? This is the most painful moment of my life!”

He sat down, nursing his forehead on his hand as he gazed gloomily at the ragged hearthrug. Essie, standing at the table, tapping the letter against her knuckles, bit her lip as she studied his despondent attitude.

“That I should have fallen so low!” groaned Sir Herbert. “My daughter receiving letters—letters expressing affection from a— Good heavens!” Rising suddenly he stared rapidly about. “Where is my hat? Where is my stick? I shall go and chastise the insolent beggar!”

“Father, for mercy's sake!”

Seizing his arm she gazed imploringly into his face.

“An insult!” he exclaimed. “An O'Hara never submitted to an insult. A beggar, a common teacher

of young ragamuffins in a National School! Good heavens! the son of a base-born peasant!"

"Oh, listen to me, father. You have not read this letter. It is most respectful. He says that he knows that it is wrong of him to write, but doubly wrong to be visiting here under such circumstances. Is not that honourable? Do listen a moment. Read the letter."

Snatching the letter from her hand he dashed it on the floor.

"How dare you," said he, "place such a letter in my hand? Have you forgotten who I am? You have forgotten yourself. You have forgotten your birth, your blood, your family. But you should not forget who and what I am!"

She had stepped apart from him mortified by his action, working her hands feverishly together with head bent low. Sir Herbert panted in his wrath, looking at her from head to foot.

"You can be satisfied," said he. "You have struck me the most humiliating blow I have ever received. Misery I could have borne, poverty—but this!"

Late that night Mike Rafferty made his way towards Mr. Flanagan's shop with a message from Sir Herbert to Clarence Maguire. Ballinabog had put up its shutters. The stars alone shed a glimmer on the straggling street. Mike, however, knew his way so well that he could have walked it blindfolded. He went gloomily along smoking his pipe turned upside down, when a man stepped from an obscure doorway.

"Where are you goin'?" asked this person.

Mike took the pipe from his mouth. He recognised at once the dull glitter of the row of buttons and the sword-belt.

"Well," said Mike, doggedly—for his despair was tending to desperation—"I'm goin' a missage for the masther."

"An' what," asked Constable Kerrigan, "might the missage from the masther be, an' who is it for?"

"He wants to have a talk wid Misther Maguire the schoolmaster," replied Mike, mechanically, "at his arliest convayniense."

"Dhin yir goin' to Flanagan's?"

"I belave so."

"That'll do for me," said Kerrigan. "I'll go along wid you."

Making no rejoinder, Mike walked doggedly on, the constable as silently pacing by his side. There was no other creature visible from one end of Main Street to the other, save a dog on the opposite side who was skulking home keeping close to the houses.

"Here we are," observed Kerrigan, halting.

Mike looked up at the shutters. There was a light in the windows over the shop as if Mr. Flanagan was retiring to rest.

"I'm afeard," said Mike, cautiously, "it's too late to be knockin' at this dacent man's house. I'll call round in the mornin'."

As he was about to turn back Kerrigan, catching him by the arm, held him steadily.

"Yill not call in the mornin'," said he, "yill call now. An' I'll tell you now, since yir here. I've wanted you for this job some time back. For I've turned it over in me mind, an' there's no time like the prisint. Yill go in there—are you listenin' t'me?"

"Shure, I hear ivry wurrud," said Mike, sulkily.

"That'll do now. Yill go in to that shop an' diliver yir missage, an' before you go yill get sarved—mind

you now—listen t'me—yill get sarved wid dhrink. D'you hear me?"

"Shure, isn't it afther hours?" suggested Mike.

Kerrigan shook him.

"Don't talk so loud," said he. "It's afther hours, an' that's the very thing I want. For I've an ould score to sittle wid this same Misther Flanagan an' I mane to sittle it. For whin I've got me eye on a man I kape it there, d'you mind? Now go in an' do as I tell you, an' iv you don't it'll be wurrse-for you. Yir on yir prowl, an' you know what to ixpict iv you don't do what yir bid."

"Shure, Misther Flanagan's a dacent, quiet man," pleaded Mike.

"That'll do, now," said Kerrigan, abruptly. "Will you do it, or will you not?"

"He'll lose his license," groaned Mike.

Putting his face so close that his breath warmed Mike's cheek, Kerrigan whispered:

"Ayther he loses his license or you lose yir liberty for twinty year. Now, you may take yir choice!"

"Well, God forgive me, it's not me fault," said Mike. "Let me go, an' I'll knock at the doore."

"Wait a momint," said Kerrigan; "I won't have any thricks. Just stan' where y'are for a couple iv minits."

Watching him with intense interest Mike saw him take from his pocket an instrument which proved to be a gimlet, for, stepping to the shutters, Kerrigan felt them carefully, then set to work to bore an eyehole which would afford him a view of the interior of the shop. This work did not take long, the shutter being old. When he had finished he shook the saw-dust from the hot gimlet, stepping back to Mike, who was aghast with awe.

"That'll do now," said Kerrigan. "There's not a shutter in the town I haven't med a gimlet-hole in. I'll put me eye to that hole, an' iv I see you play any thricks you know what'll happen. Go an' knock at the doore now, an' rimimbir I have me eye on you!"

With an effort Mike, stepping to the door, rapped heavily with his knuckles, while Kerrigan hid himself in a neighbouring doorway.

There was no reply to Mike's knock. He rapped again. Having waited for several moments without response, he stepped back to look up at the window. The light was still visible through the blinds, but Mike, instead of knocking again, looked round the dark thoroughfare as if meditating flight.

"Knock loudher!" said Kerrigan, in a hoarse whisper from his hiding-place.

Relinquishing the idea of flight as useless Mike once more rapped at the door, never ceasing until he heard some one stirring within.

A voice called through the keyhole, "Who's there, in the name iv God?"

"It's me, Misther Flanagan," shouted Mike, with his mouth close to the door. "Mike Rafferty."

"An' what d'you want at this hour, Mike?" asked the voice.

"I've a missage from Sur Harbit," shouted Mike. "He ses——"

"That'll do now," interrupted Kerrigan, stepping out a moment from his hiding-place and speaking in a stern whisper. "Inside you get be hook or crook."

"What d'you say?" asked Mr. Flanagan again.

"Shure me voice is hoarse shoutin'," said Mike, with a cough. "Open the doore, an' I'll tell you."

The bolts were drawn and, as the door opened,

the full voice of Mr. Flanagan was heard across the road.

"Shure dhin, Mike," said he, "I beg pardin for kapin' you so long on the wrong side iv the doore. Come in, me bould son. Stan' in ow a the draught."

Struggling a moment with a sense of his mission, Mike hesitated, but Mr. Flanagan, catching him by the arm, dragged him in. Closing the door Mr. Flanagan, turning his head as he shot the bolt, remarked with a wink :

"I must take care iv me license, Mike, for, you know, it's afther hours."

On the counter he had placed the lamp he had carried from upstairs. He took it up to have a look at his companion.

"An' what is the missage ?" he asked.

"The masther," said Mike, doggedly, "wants to see Misther Maguire, the schoolmasther."

"Mike," said Mr. Flanagan, "he's fast aslape. I'll tell him in the mornin'. Will that do ?"

"I'll go back an' tell the masther."

"Wait a momint, Mike."

Mr. Flanagan took up the lamp to light himself round to the back of the counter.

"What'll you take to dhrink, Mike ?"

"Misther Flanagan," said Mike, hoarsely, "I'll take nothin' but a glass iv wather, iv it's all the same to you."

Mr. Flanagan, who had been holding up the lamp to see the shelves, turned round, laid the lamp down again on the counter, on which he also spread his large hands as he bent forward to gaze wonderingly at Mike's averted face.

"A glass——" said he. "What did you say, Mike?"

"A glass iv wather, sur," replied Mike, feebly.

"Let me luk at you, Mike," said Mr. Flanagan, anxiously. "Hould up yir face. Is it jokin' y'are?"

Mike turned with miserable expression to him.

"Is it jokin' me y'are?" repeated Mr. Flanagan, "wid yir glass iv wather?"

He deftly filled a glass of whiskey.

"There," said he, placing it before Mike, "there's somethin' to raise the cockles iv yir heart. Wather? God forgive you, Mike, for thryin' to make a fool iv me in me ould age. Shure, I'll have a glass meself to show there's no ill-falin'. Here's long life t'you, Mike!"

As he raised the glass to his lips he was arrested in the act by the suddenness with which Mike, coming closer to the counter, bent forward—after a hurried glance at the shutters—to whisper:

"Misther Flanagan, don't ax me to take a dhrink to-night, for the love iv God! Not to-night! Another time. Give me a dhrink iv wather, but don't give me beer, porther, or sperrits to be," continued Mike, feverishly, "consoomed on the primissis."

Still holding the glass near his mouth Mr. Flanagan looked over it steadily at Mike for some moments, then, without speaking, drank the glassful, after which he looked at Mike again.

"Mike Rafferty," said he, solemnly, "yir not well; or, mebbe, you don't want to take a dhrink from me as a gift or in a frindly way. Say the wurrud, Mike, an' I'll chalk it up to yir account, or say the wurrud an' I'll fling it undher the counther. Man alive, take yir glass, an' don't be stannin' there, lukin' at it like an ijit!"

As Mike took up the glass his hand trembled.

"Misther Flanagan," he faltered, "here's long life an' good luk t'you! An' may God forgive me all me sins!"

He finished the glass without the addition of water, then, strenuously refusing the offer of another, insisted on being let out.

The door being opened, Mr. Flanagan held it well back, saying:

"Good-night, Mike, an' good luk!"

Mike stepped out. At the same moment Constable Kerrigan laid a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"What's this?" shouted Kerrigan. "Is this what goes on here afther hours?"

Hastily barring the door, Mr. Flanagan put his back to it. His face had turned pale.

"You may bar the doore now as much as you like," shouted Kerrigan through the keyhole. "I've got you this time!"

Sinking down on a barrel Mr. Flanagan listened to the footsteps dying away down the street.

"Be japers," he muttered, huskily, "he *has* got me. I'm a ruined man!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAW OF CASTE

IT was late next evening when Mr. Flanagan suddenly recollected Sir Herbert's message. Clarence at once started for the Red House. As he approached he distinguished Essie standing at the window. She opened the door.

"Sir Herbert sent for me," he explained, as they shook hands.

"I know," she responded ; "but I want to say a word to you before you go upstairs."

He followed her into the room, where she sat down at the window. He took the chair nearest the door. The moon made, on the opposite wall, a shadow-picture of Essie's head and shoulders with the window and curtains.

"Do you know why father wants you?"

"No. But I am glad to be here. To see you is new life to me ; to hear your voice——"

"You must not speak like that !"

"But it is true," he returned, simply.

"I do not wish to hear it. I want to talk to you about yourself. You like teaching, do you not? I mean at the schools?"

"Sometimes."

"But is it not a splendid thing to devote oneself to teaching young minds? One should have some object in life, and above all——"

"What is above all?"

"Self-renunciation."

She looked with softened expression at the round moon behind the tall black trees of the shrubbery, and for some moments there was silence.

"If you could devote yourself entirely to teaching," she resumed. "It is hard, no doubt. You know I had a very pleasant life at one time? Yes. I have renounced it for ever. I live for father. At times life is very difficult, but what sustains one is the great ideal."

"The great ideal?" he repeated, wonderingly.

"Yes; of resignation."

Sir Herbert was heard walking across the floor upstairs. He came out to the landing and called her. She went upstairs. When she returned her eyes were red.

"Father will see you now, Mr. Maguire."

Turning in the hall as he saw her standing in the doorway he said, eagerly:

"May I see you before I leave?"

She shook her head.

"I do not know," she replied, gravely.

Upstairs Sir Herbert paced the room, deep in thought.

"Ah, Mr. Maguire, I expected you before."

"I got your message," said Clarence, "only a short time ago."

"Sit down."

Obedying, Clarence nervously grasped his stick across his knees. After an additional turn about the room

Sir Herbert put his hand on the arm-chair as if to sit down, but, on second thoughts, rested against the table, crossing his legs and folding his arms.

"I should like you first to understand," he began, "that in anything I say to you I am not actuated by any other feelings but those of—well, of friendship. For, indeed, you are a very young man and I am getting old. Getting old! I must remember that."

Clarence gazed silently at the floor.

"I do not desire to say a word to hurt your feelings," continued Sir Herbert. "I have received you in this house, Mr. Maguire, somewhat as a friend. Have I not?"

"I am very grateful."

"I tried to make you feel at home. I know you have rather a lonely life of it. I am afraid, however, you have perhaps misunderstood our attempts to make you feel at ease."

"I do not understand," murmured Clarence.

With a handkerchief Sir Herbert dusted his eyeglass, which he put in his eye; then, folding his arms again, looked steadily at the ceiling.

"Mr. Maguire, you have written a letter to my daughter—to Miss O'Hara."

Clarence quickly reddened. He kept his head bent, pressing his hands hard between his knees.

"That was an indiscretion. I do not wish to deal too hardly with you as you are a young offend—I mean, a young person. But it was a great indiscretion."

He dusted his eyeglass again while waiting for a reply; but there was none.

"Mr. Maguire, I will not ask you on what grounds you dared—you were so indiscreet as to address my daughter through the post. I will not inquire on what

grounds you assumed that—that, in fact, she could receive letters from you——”

“I wrote one,” said Clarence, quickly. “I regret it. I should not have written it.”

“Ah, I am glad you admit your error. I may tell you I was extremely annoyed when I heard of it. Very much annoyed, indeed! Let me explain to you, Mr. Maguire, in a few words. I am a very proud man. I have reason to be. My daughter is equally proud. We have moved in the highest circles, and, please God, shall do so again. Do you suppose that because of our temporary poverty that you could——”

Clarence rose.

“No, sir. I do not dare to hope that Miss O’Hara could condescend to notice me. I have been mad.”

“Mr. Maguire, listen to me.”

Clarence, who was making blindly to the door, turned, leaning heavily on his stick. Allowing the glass to drop from his eye, Sir Herbert raised his hand aloft.

“Mr. Maguire, I would sooner see my daughter dead at my feet than see her lose caste. Young man, I do not wish to hurt your feelings, but, you have forgotten your station. Good-bye!”

Essie came from the room below as Clarence entered the hall. She called him. He gazed at her but went on. She put her hand on his arm. He turned.

“What are you going to do?” she asked, in a low voice.

“What, miss?”

She repeated her question. He laughed strangely.

“Shure, I’ll go back to me wurruk,” he replied, “what I was borrin for.”

She shrank hastily as he spoke. Next moment he

was gone. She hastened upstairs. Entering the room, she exclaimed :

" Father, he is terribly hurt. He is talking like a peasant ! "

Turning in his chair Sir Herbert frowned at her.

" Really, Essie, you take an incomprehensible interest in that young man. Pray do not let your surroundings demoralise you. He said he was mad. He is right. He *was* mad. Impertinent peasant ! The decanter, please. "

While he was busy with his glass she went to the window. Clarence was limping quickly down the path. She stood watching him until he was hid by the trees near the gate.

" Essie ! "

She turned sharply. Her father was replacing the decanter on the table. He held the glass in his right hand as he looked keenly at her.

" What is it, father ? "

" Look at me, Essie. "

She faced him with a forced smile. He came close to her, putting a hand on her shoulder while he peered into her face.

" Are you crying, girl ? " he asked, sternly.

She slipped from his grasp.

" What a question, father ! Of course not. "

" Very well. That is right. "

He paused to look at her again before returning to his chair. Her face was proud and calm.

" Ah, my child, I am becoming sour and cross. Come and give me a kiss, my poor child. God bless you ! "

When he sat down he waited until she stooped to kiss his brow, then, sighing deeply, he finished his glass of whiskey.

Outside Essie met Mrs. Grogarty and Biddy descending the stairs. They were talking in undertones. Seeing her mistress, Biddy gave a start. Mrs. Grogarty, at the same moment, blew out the candle which she carried. When they had gone down Essie looked over the balusters. She could indistinctly see the figures in the hall with their heads whispering close together. Presently Mrs. Grogarty, striking a match, relit the candle. Shading the light with her hand, the old woman looked furtively up the stairs. Essie drew back. When she looked down again she saw Biddy sprinkling some liquid freely from a bottle under the direction of her companion. Running swiftly down, Essie arrived before they realised her presence.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"God bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Grogarty. "You gev me such a fright, miss. Och, shure, we're doin' no harrum at all, Miss Essie, darlint; no harrum in the wurruld!"

"What's in that bottle?" asked Essie, pointing to the apron under which Biddy hid the bottle tightly gripped with both hands.

"The bottle, miss?" said Biddy, with amazed innocence.

"You were sprinkling something from a bottle. I saw it. What is in it?"

"Shure there's nothin' in it at all, miss," replied Biddy.

"Arra, Miss Essie, jule, don't be goin' agin the warnins of the Shan Van!" implored old Mrs. Grogarty. "Shure, wud the pains an' aches in the legs iv me an' in the backbone iv me, it's not here I ought to be at all, but in me bed nursin' me ould body. But shure, whin I hard he was here talkin' wid you I cudn't rest, an' I

med Biddy bring out the bottle iv holy wather an' put it about the place. Miss Essie, jule, darlint, he's put the aival eye on you, achushla, and it's faydin' away y'are before me very eyes. An' shure yill lis'en t'me, for I've bin in yir sarvice forty year, an' I'm racked wid the pain in me bones, an' there's nothin' does me good but the charrums iv the Shan Van. Miss Essie, darlint, don't go away ! It's the thought iv you an' the faydin' away iv you kapes the slape out iv me head. Shure, iv he's put the aival eye on you, achushla, it's all over wid you. Miss Essie, darlint——"

But Essie was half-way up the stairs. In her own room she sat down on the bed, pressing her hands on her brows. She heard the women still whispering downstairs. Seized with a sudden fear, she lit the lamp. Holding up the light she looked around the walls and searched the wardrobe. Finally she turned down the pillow. Underneath lay the little black silk bag which held the charm of the Shan Van. She stared at it with horror. At length, taking it between finger and thumb and holding it at arm's distance, she opened the window and flung it out. For some moments she stood there with the breeze cooling her face. The roofs of the main street glittered under the full moon. Far away she fancied a lonely figure limping across the bog. It was a distant tree waving its branches against the sky.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE RETURN TO THE SOIL

A MONTH passed. One morning Clarence, who had risen late, found a paper on his table. He took a cup of tea, snatching up the paper as he hurried out. On the way to school he tore off the wrapper and found the current issue of *The Ballinabog and County Star*. There was an article marked with red pencil. He read the opening sentences :

“It is with regret that we state that for some time past a cloud has settled on the Ballinabog National Schools. Strange rumours are afloat. The parents of many pupils, under the influence of these sinister murmurs, are withdrawing their children. If this exodus lasts much longer the schools will be empty ! It is not our province as publicists to investigate the truth or otherwise of the rumours referred to ; with that we have nothing to do. Our own opinion on this matter is well known. We repudiate the revival of occult superstitions in our midst. But, as public journalists, we are bound to note that, owing to this cause, the children are being withdrawn from the schools, and, in the interests of education, we must ask, Can nothing be done ?”

Clarence had read thus far when he arrived at the schools. Folding the paper he thrust it into his pocket. He had suspected for some time the reason of the exodus referred to by the *Star*. The Shan Van had taken up a permanent residence in the town, since which he had cause to feel the extent of her influence amongst the more ignorant of the townsfolk. Each morning at roll-call pupils had failed to appear. Now the matter had become the subject of leading articles in the *Star*.

He noted this morning also several fresh absentees. The principal of the school spoke to him of the attenuated attendance without directly stating the cause, but in a manner which left Clarence under no misapprehension. He went through the day's routine with a strange sense of weariness. The monotonous recital of the lessons by the class almost drove him mad. Sometimes the half-circle of children who stood before him with their hands behind their backs seemed to recede to an immeasurable distance. When the bell rung for playtime he spread his arms on his desk, resting his face on them as if the morning had been a month of penal servitude. The boisterous playing of the boys in the yard outside his window roused him. He remembered the unfinished article. With a sudden determination to face the worst, he read to the last word. The writer, without mentioning him by name, indicated him, and called on him to sacrifice his private interests for the public good.

The paper had fallen to the floor. Clarence sat alone in the schoolroom, his arms listlessly resting on the desk. He glanced at the maps and diagrams on the whitewashed walls, the rows of long, empty desks, then out at the window to where the children were noisily

romping, but he was conscious of nothing. All at once a little boy was hurled against the window, smashing a pane. Starting up, Clarence hurried out to the yard.

A ring of boys had formed in a corner round Patsy Flanagan and another boy, who had fought fiercely across the yard to the window near which Patsy, with all the force of his little fists, had struck his opponent, who fell against the glass. The catastrophe of the broken pane had frightened the ring of boys, who sneaked away in different directions with an assumption of complete innocence. But Patsy with his coat off, his fists still raised, his lips bloody, stood menacingly over the fallen foe, who showed no immediate inclination to rise.

"Patsy Flanagan."

It was Clarence who spoke in his sternest tones. Patsy looking up, glanced about for his coat. He found it near, on the ground, and put it on as he advanced to the schoolmaster.

"You have been fighting," said Clarence, loudly enough to be heard by the breathless, listening yard-full of boys.

Patsy wiped his mouth with the backs of his hands.

"Yis, sur," said he.

"I must punish you," said Clarence. "Go into the schoolroom!"

Without a word Patsy went in. Clarence then made inquiries, both of Patsy's antagonist and the rest, as to the cause of the quarrel, but to his surprise he could get no direct information. The antagonist, Johnnie Clarke, merely blubbered; the other boys gave various accounts which Clarence, from his experience of boyhood, knew to be false. He went into the

schoolroom, where he found Patsy standing awaiting him.

"Patsy," said Clarence, gently, "I am sorry this has happened. But I must punish you."

"Yis, sur," assented Patsy.

"Because," explained Clarence, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder, "if I did not do so the other boys would say I favoured you because I lived in your father's house. Don't you understand?"

"I do, sur."

"Very well, Patsy. I shall keep you in from play now and also for an hour after school. I am sorry, but I must do so."

Patsy said nothing. He was still busy wiping the blood from his lips with the tail of his coat. Clarence, who was walking to his desk, turned round.

"Patsy."

"Yis, sir."

Patsy looked up.

"Why," asked Clarence, "did you fight Clarke?"

"Bekase," answered Patsy, "he said you wor a changelin'."

Clarence's hand felt for the desk behind him, while he grew white to the lips.

"A changeling?" he repeated, hoarsely.

"Yis, sur," said Patsy, in the most matter-of-fact manner; "an' me daddy tould me I wasn't to let any iv the boys call you a changelin'. But Clarke did an' I hit him a belt, an' then he hit me, an' then I hit him another belt, an' then," concluded Patsy, excitedly, "his head come agin the winda!"

After this recital there was silence. Patsy was still busy with his teeth and lips and wiping the backs of his hands on his trousers, when Clarence suddenly seized

the little shoulders and kissed Patsy on the bloodstained cheek. Patsy Flanagan looked up amazed. Tears were rolling down the schoolmaster's face.

"Patsy."

"Yis, sur," returned Patsy, staring with all his eyes.

"You must not fight again."

"No, sur."

"An' you may go out and play," said Clarence, quickly.

"And you are not to stay in after school. Run away, Patsy."

Patsy needed no second command. He was gone in an instant. Then the boys saw a strange sight. Clarence Maguire, his face ghastly pale, walked silently through their midst, his hat on his head and all his belongings under his arm. He never returned.

That same night when the moon was shining over the bog and old Peter Maguire was slumbering, there came a knocking at the cabin door. So singular a noise in the solemn quietude of the night, in that lonely place, at once roused the old peasant, who sat up on the sacks which formed his bed listening. The knocking was repeated.

"Who's there, in the name iv God?" cried the old man, trembling.

"It is I," said a voice.

"The schoolmaster!" exclaimed the old man, rising.

"Your grandson," was the reply.

The old man, in his shirt and trousers, stood trembling in the middle of the earthen floor. There was a red glimmer from the dying turf fire. The moonlight shone through the little window on the settle bed where Clarence had been born.

"Let me in, grandfather!"

"What d'you want?" asked the old man, hoarsely.

"To go in—to sleep—to live with you a while. Let me in and I shall tell you."

For some moments there was no response. The old man still remained standing, his face working, his hands wandering about his breast. Clarence knocked again.

"What keeps you, grandfather?"

The old man then went to the door, where he remained a long while unable, with his shaking hands, to undo the bolt.

"Hurry, grandfather. It is very cold out here."

When the door was at length opened, Clarence came limping in carrying a bag. His grandfather having closed the door, stood gazing speechlessly at him. Clarence sat down on the settle bed, throwing his bag on the floor. He looked at the turf fire.

"I have left the school," said he.

His grandfather said nothing. He went to the fire, where he stirred the turf with his naked foot until the flames began to flicker. He did not glance at the dejected figure on the settle, but dragging a stool close to the fire sat down, spreading his palms to the blaze.

"Never to go back," said Clarence, nursing his chin as he watched the fire. "No more teaching. I am free—free to face the life of the peasant for which I was made."

There was no rejoinder.

"I should never have left it," said Clarence, again; "I should never have left this old home." He looked up at the blackened rafters with the dried sods which formed the roofing between. "But my head was full of dreams."

The old man with his palms spread to the blaze said never a word.

Clarence looked at him after a while.

"Grandfather."

There was no response.

"Can I stay here with you?" asked Clarence, anxiously. "Will I be in your way? Can I stay, at least for a few days?"

"You kin stay here," replied the old man, "as long as you like."

There was no tone of welcome in his voice, but Clarence's eyes brightened.

"I will work with you," said he. "You and I are alone in the world now, grandfather. I wish I had never left you. I have never had a happy hour since!"

"Yir Uncle Dan," observed the old man, "left in bad blood. Nivir a line since. It's God's will. I'll say no more. Yir Uncle Dan, mebbe he's dead an' buried in Amerikay be now—he left in bad blood. May God have marcy on his sowl! I've sorra'd for him these many an' many a day. Dan, me brave boy!"

"You've nursed this sorrow all alone, grandfather," said Clarence, brokenly, "for so long, and I—— But," after a pause, "it is all over now. I shall do my duty from this time forth."

He looked around. The turf fire was fading.

"I feel cold," said he. "I'll put on some turf."

"Cowld?" said his grandfather. "It's a warrum night."

Clarence, however, took several sods from beside the fireplace, and breaking them across his knee, placed them on the fire which he stirred up with his foot. Later, arranging the settle bed, he lay down in his clothes and fell asleep.

He awoke at daybreak. At first he thought he was in

the room at Mr. Flanagan's. The sight of the black rafters restored his memory. He raised himself on his elbow. The fire had burned out. But there sat his grandfather, musing still, with his face nursed on his hands.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FRESH BROOMS !

FOR some days Clarence worked about the place. He fattened the pig for market, cut turf from the bog, and discovered the eggs which the ducks laid in out-of-the-way corners. But despite his brave endeavour to be cheerfully resigned he had frequent fits of despair. His grandfather rarely spoke. They had no ideas in common. When they sat down to their dinner of potatoes and salt placed on the earthen floor, Clarence's presence seemed to oppress the old man. Sometimes Clarence found himself staring wistfully across the bog towards the smoke from the chimneys of the town.

The long evenings were the worst trial of all. For then, when work was over, and he sat on the settle bed while his grandfather smoked, the lack of sympathy between them became painful. Clarence had not even the resource of reading, for he had renounced books. He used to listen, despite himself, to the monotonous puffings of the pipe, and when the old man paused to expectorate it had to Clarence the agonising effect of an event of importance. When the nights were fine he would sometimes go outside, seat himself on an old barrel, and watch the fantastic effects of the moonlight as the mist rose from the bog, or gaze at the stars, pondering

on the problems of infinity until he got a cramp in his neck. But when he returned to the cabin there was the old man as silent as ever. After some time Clarence observed with surprise that his grandfather retired last to rest, but for what reason he never inquired.

His grandfather slept on a heap of sacking in the corner beside the fire, which was simply a few turfs on the floor, without chimney or grate, the smoke crawling along the rafters and finding an exit when and where it could. This smoke painfully affected Clarence's unaccustomed eyes. On several occasions when, in the dead of night, he lay still but awake, covered with an old sack, he saw his grandfather rising on his elbow to gaze fixedly across at him. When he found Clarence gazing back, the old man would moan and lie down again.

One day Clarence returned from a stroll over the bog. His grandfather, kneeling on the floor, was sharpening a long, ugly knife on a stone. He had not heard Clarence enter, for he looked up with a sudden air of fright.

"What is the knife for?" asked Clarence.

The old man, rising, went to the far corner, where a packing-case served as a cupboard. Here, as he secreted the knife, he turned his head, replying:

"Shure, 't'z to cut the heather wid."

"To cut heather?" repeated Clarence, simply.

"For the brooms," explained the old man. "It's got blunt. Ay, to cut the brooms. That's all."

Clarence made no further remark. But evening he remarked:

"You go into the town to-morrow, grand"

They were both seated with a stack of heather between them, making the cheap brooms—four a peck—the old man sometimes vended.

"Ay," replied his grandfather, "iv I kin get a couple iv kreels iv brooms I'll thry an' sell them."

"I'll go with you," said Clarence.

His grandfather, tying a broom across his knee, looked up with astonishment.

"You kin come," he said, after a pause, "iv you like."

"Yes," returned Clarence, "I will share your work, even to the selling of brooms."

To this, as usual, the old man said nothing. Both in silence continued their work, which consisted of tying a bundle of heather with a thin strip of bark. At dusk the old man lit a tallow candle which he stuck in a bottle, placing it on the floor. Beside them they laid the brooms as they were made. They worked until midnight, when Clarence, exhausted, retired to bed. The old man worked methodically on.

Next afternoon the town of Ballinabog became quickly aware of the amazing fact that Clarence Maguire, ex-schoolmaster, was helping his grandfather to sell brooms in the streets. The brooms were stuffed in two kreels either side of the donkey, which the old man led by the bridle, calling out at intervals, in a shrill voice, "Four a pinny—fresh brooms!"

Clarence walked sometimes beside his grandfather, sometimes behind the donkey. At first he attempted to look the rapidly-increasing groups in the face, but the effort was too much. He hung his head, miserably blushing with an intense feeling of degradation which would not be reasoned away. The progress through the town seemed to him to take years. But the worst came later. As they passed the post-office he heard an exclamation of surprise. Looking up he saw Miss O'Hara in the doorway, aghast with astonishment. The

street seemed to swim before him. He laid his hand on the donkey's head to steady himself. At the touch the feeling of degradation became intensified.

"Grandfather," he said, hoarsely, "come back, come back!"

The imperturbable old peasant, gazing at the houses as he passed, paid no heed, but continued at intervals his monotonous cry, "Four a pinny—fresh brooms!"

But that day there was not one broom sold in Ballinabog. By degrees, as the old man began to realise this fact, his cry grew weaker, and from time to time he glanced darkly at Clarence. But though no one bought, the crowd gathered to look at them. In fact, the crowds increased so fast that the police appeared in force. Finally, Clarence, seizing the bridle, forced the donkey round despite his grandfather's resistance. Clarence held on to the bridle, striving by jerking it to make the donkey go faster; but the donkey never went slower than he went that day. The cries of the boys grew more excited; their elders began to shout. The old man gesticulated behind the donkey, his remonstrances lost in the noise of the people. On the outskirts of the town they received a volley of stones. The police made several arrests. This exasperated the people who hooted Clarence. He staggered on like a man in a dream, while his grandfather, who had been struck by a stone, wiped the blood from his face. Several constables marched behind them until they were out of the town. At the beginning of the bog Clarence relinquished the donkey to its own resources, dropping back to console his grandfather as best he could. But the old man never uttered a word. His face, on which some of the blood had dried, had a fixed look of sullen apathy. When at last Clarence

entered the cabin, he threw himself on the settle bed, covering his face with his hands.

No word passed between them for the rest of the day. Towards midnight Clarence, without undressing, lay down exhausted and fell asleep. The old man, seated on his stool, suddenly looked up. Then he bent his ear to listen to the deep breathing of the sleeper.

Rising after some minutes, he blew out the candle. With a terrible expression he crept to the cupboard, where he groped silently about until he drew forth the long knife. This he hid under his coat. Creeping back to the stool he sat down. He listened again. Clarence still slept. The old man noiselessly took off his brogues. He stole across to the settle bed. Still keeping the knife under his coat, he groped lightly until his fingers rested on Clarence's chest. Slight as the movement was it woke Clarence. He saw his grandfather bending over him. The old man stood motionless.

"What is the matter, grandfather?" muttered Clarence, drowsily.

"I was only settlin' the sack on ye," said the old man, at the same time pulling it up.

Taking his grandfather's hand, Clarence pressed it to his lips.

"Ah, grandfather," said he, "you are too good to me."

Turning, he fell asleep again, holding his grandfather's hand. After a time the old man crept to the cupboard where he replaced the knife. Seating himself once more on the stool, he nursed his face on his hands.

"To-morra," he muttered. "I'll do it to-morra night!"

Early next day when Clarence woke he found his grandfather curled up on the sacks fast asleep. He

softly opened the door. The air struck freshly on his face. He held out his palms to it. Then he wandered across the bog.

He had awoke with a sense of restlessness. That feeling increased. The objects he looked at merged into each other. He began to lose the sense of perspective. In his ears the cries of the crowd of yesterday mingled with the lowing of the cows in a distant meadow. Sometimes while he listened, not to real sounds but to the derisive hooting of the people in his memory, the cawing of a solitary rook on the wing brought him suddenly to himself. The landscape would then come back abruptly, so microscopic in detail that the hidden mechanism of the slightest forms of vegetation seemed revealed to him. Every twig of every tree had its clearly-defined image ; a rabbit which shot across his path showed him all the subtle changes of its colouring. He seemed not only able but forced to count the feathers of a little bird in a bush pluming its bosom in the sunlight. This exaggerated sense of sight caused him so much agony that he often lay down with his face to the ground, his hands against his eyes to press the images away. To this mood succeeded the voices of yesterday, with his grandfather's monotonous chaunt, " Four a pinny—fresh brooms ! "

His only idea as to the direction of his wanderings was to avoid a human face. If he saw one, however distant, he turned back, keeping clear of footpaths and roads, tearing his way through hedges, climbing the rough stone walls. He seemed months afoot, yet was not physically weary. He shrieked aloud a prayer for oblivion. It came at last. As he crossed a little bypath between ditches, he caught a glimpse of a man coming

towards him. Blindly struggling to escape, Clarence stumbled and fell unconscious.

When he came to himself he opened his eyes but saw nothing. Closing them again, he heard confused voices near, growing more and more familiar. Sometimes they sounded a dull murmur dying far away, then a group of words suddenly detached themselves, striking clearly on his ears to be succeeded by the general murmur. Again and again his eyes opened until, little by little, the surroundings cleared. He knew the scene was familiar, but could not localise it. Presently a cool, broad hand was laid on his brows. A firm voice distinctly said, "Kape still, Misther Clarence, avic."

This was the culminating point of his confused impressions. He stared at the speaker, and, after what seemed a long lapse of time, he recognised him. It was Mr. Flanagan. Clarence gazed about. He was lying on his old bed in the garret, and Mr. Flanagan was alone watching him, while the voices, chiefly that of Mrs. Flanagan, were downstairs.

"Kape still, Misther Clarence," repeated Mr. Flanagan, "for I fear yir in a bad way, achushla."

Presently he poured out some brandy. Putting his arm around Clarence's shoulders he raised him to drink.

"I found you in the boreen," explained Mr. Flanagan, when Clarence lay back somewhat revived, "an' carried you here. It's wake y'are, an' the dochtor ses yir in for a bad turn. So just lie still an' think iv nothin', me poor boy."

For some weeks Clarence lay ill. Mr. Flanagan attended him night and day, all the time of nursing remaining in his shirt-sleeves and socks. There was one thing Mr. Flanagan felt more than anything else

—the deprivation of smoking. But after some days he ventured to sit on the stairs with his pipe, carefully wafting away the smoke lest it should invade the sick-room. By and by, when the patient was somewhat better, Mr. Flanagan would steal down at intervals to the back yard, watching the garret window as he smoked.

Clarence himself knew he was getting better because the apple blossoms on the wall-paper remained in their places. During his illness he had seen them slowly growing into grotesque human faces, sometimes those of hydrocephalic babies and Shan Van hags. They used to swarm from the wall, he without power to make them vanish, but rather forced to watch them with his burning eyes. Back somewhere in this gruesome crowd he often heard, "Fresh brooms—four a pinny !"

During recovery, when he turned his face on the pillow at night to go to sleep, the shaded lamp on the table showed him these apple blossoms, and he would take a good look at them with apprehensive terror lest they might begin to move again and change into faces. When he found them immovable he would give a deep sigh of relief, closing his eyes restfully for the night.

One day when Clarence was sleeping quietly Mr. Flanagan thought he might safely call round to see his friend Mr. Gilligan. While passing out through the shop an old white-haired peasant entered. It was Peter Maguire of the bog.

"God save you, ould man," said Mr. Flanagan. "So yiv come at last !"

The old man, taking off his cap, held it with trembling hands against his breast as he looked up.

"I'm tould," said he, in a startled whisper, "that he's dyin'."

"No, thank God," said Mr. Flanagan; "not yit, anyhow. He's had a harrrd turn, poor chap, but he's on the minnd now, thanks be to God."

"I thought," whispered old Peter, "it 'ud be bettther to come an' see him. Mebbe. I dunno. They said, 'Go an' see him anyhow.'"

Lifting his hat to scratch his head, Mr. Flanagan gazed down dubiously at the old man.

"Well," said he, "the boy's not yit fit for visitirs, an' I'm goin' round mesilf, this minit, to see me frind Misther Gilligan. Misther Clarence is havin' a rale good slape, an' I don't want him to be disthurbed. The dochtor warned me agin a rilapse, for a rilapse is a terrible thing intirely. But," after a long consideration, "as yir his gran'father I don't see in raisin how I kin privint you goin' in an' havin' a look at him, if so be you want to an' you have sinse enough not to disthurb him. Ay, I sippose, yid bettther see him for five minits. Will that do?"

"Ay, throth. I'd bettther see him, they said. I don't want to spake to him."

"Yid bettther not," suggested Mr. Flanagan, impressively. "I want him to git a good slape. An' if you go up don't make any noise wid yir brogues. Yid bettther go dhin," he added, with a sigh of relief, "in the name iv God, an' I'll hurry back from Jo Gillgan's mesilf."

He led the old man up the stairs, softly opening the door of the sick-room. Then, having cautioned him again against disturbing the patient, he left for Joseph Gilligan's.

Clarence soon after awoke. He saw, kneeling in the middle of the floor, his grandfather, who was praying

in a subdued voice. Clarence smiled, stretching out his hand.

"Grandfather," said he.

The old man continued praying for some time, then rose. He advanced to the bedside, where he remained standing.

"Are ye goin' away, now, at last," said he, "iv yir own fray will? For I bear you no malice."

"I am getting better," said Clarence, surprised; "the doctor says I am getting better."

His voice was so weak that the old man, bending down his ear, only caught a word or two.

"Ye lift me that morn," said his grandfather, "iv yir own fray will. I don't ax why or wherefore."

Clarence passed a hand across his brows.

"I don't remember," said he.

"The day afther we thried to sell the brooms," explained his grandfather, "in the town, an' sorra wan cud we sell."

"Never sold a broom?" said Clarence, his eyes brightening strangely.

"Ye know why betther nor me," said the old man, submissively. "It's not for me to ax. Whin I got a blow iv a stone in the jaw an' the polis kem——"

Clarence turned, his eyes resting for a moment on his grandfather's face, then wandering uneasily to the wall-paper.

"Did they strike you?" he murmured. "Who? Where?"

"But it wasn't the brooms thrubbed me," said the old man. "Shure it was nayther here nor there. Iv yir passin' away now, I nivir wronged ye. I don't bear ill-will agin ye. Thim that ye go to know that betther nor me."

"They hooted us"—Clarence began to speak as if in a dream—"and the police were there, and she! Ah, stop them! Take me away!"

He partly raised himself, but sank back moaning, tossing his head about the pillow.

"It wasn't in me power to stop them!" exclaimed the old man, excitedly. "It was in yours iv ye had the mind. But ye didn't do it. An' I sthruv to kape down what I had agin ye in me heart, bekase I don't want to be judge an' jury agin ye."

Clarence glared at the wall. The apple blossoms began to move; already some of them were forming into faces.

"It is all coming back," he moaned. "My head!"

"Whatsomivir's in yir head or heart," cried the old man, "all I ax is, don't take away any ill-will agin me whin yir gone."

"Stop it! Hide me! Go away!" exclaimed Clarence, sitting up and staring at the wall.

"There y'are!" shouted the old man, more excitedly. "Ye see thim wid yir own eyes, an' ye know the pow'r the' have, an' iv yir passin' tell thim to lave me in pace."

Having fallen back again, Clarence placed both hands on his brows as he writhed.

"My head," he moaned repeatedly. "Oh, my head!"

"Ay," cried his grandfather, "pass now, changelin', an' sind me back me gran'child!"

The door opened, and Mr. Flanagan appeared aghast on the threshold. The old man, with upraised hands, stood beside the bed. Clarence with the bright crimson spots burning anew on his cheeks, gazed with brilliant eyes wildly about.

Mr. Flanagan seized the old peasant roughly.

"Come out iv this," he said, in a choking voice, "you tarin' ould vagabind. Yiv killed the poor boy!"

With dropped jaw old Peter Maguire turned to look back at the bed, but Mr. Flanagan fiercely thrust him from the room.

"What have you done?" said he, when they were outside. "The lad I lift slapin' a peaceful, quiet slape worth its weight in goold! God forgive you, ould man, what have you done? It's all back agin on the child—the thrimblins and the fayvir! Wirrorasthru, what are you at all, you ignirint ould crathur! Go home! in the name iv God, go home!"

The old man having descended a few steps, looked back, his hands on the balusters.

"He's dyin', isn't he?" he asked, eagerly. "He'll be gone in the morn?"

Mr. Flanagan stared wonderingly at him.

"Be me sowl," said he, sternly, "you talk as iv you wanted him to die. Go home now, an' nivir let me see yir face agin. An ould man like you! May God forgive you!"

Clarence fought anew for life. Gradually he recovered. As nurse Mr. Flanagan surpassed himself. When Clarence finally became convalescent, he would sometimes sit in an arm-chair, with a blanket round his knees, gazing through the window. To his sad questions Mr. Flanagan always answered cheerfully but briefly, lest a prolonged conversation should bring on another relapse, which it was more than ever his desire to avoid. In fact the word "relapse" haunted Mr. Flanagan even in his dreams.

By degrees, as Clarence grew stronger, he was able to walk a little, leaning on Mr. Flanagan's arm. Before these promenades began Mr. Flanagan removed from

the floor all things liable to trip the invalid's uncertain feet. Chairs and table were lifted softly to the wall, and even bits of paper were gathered and placed in the grate. When Clarence, on one occasion, suggested that he should try a walk alone Mr. Flanagan assented with an assumption of delight, but watched with extreme terror the invalid's trembling limbs from the arm-chair to the bed. After this heroic adventure Clarence lay down on the bed and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE MAN WITH THE BLACK BAG

THE same evening news arrived at the constabulary barracks that a riot had broken out. The twenty-five muscular constables smiled. A hurried council of war was held between the district inspector and the head constable. The young officer was for an instant charge in full force; the old head constable, unwilling to spoil sport for the young hands, advised their arrival in small detachments. Two and two, with intervals of a few minutes between, the men sauntered up the street. When the roughs, who had been battering at Mr. Flanagan's door yelling, "Down wid the changelin'!" began to stone the windows, the constables as they arrived had a lively time. A little later the charge of the full force scattered the mob. The constables drew up in double ranks before Mr. Flanagan's door to rest. An unexpected rush of the rioters was made from Chapel Lane, stoning the house as they passed. These tactics were repeated, until the head constable suggested to the district inspector that it would be advisable to hold the rallying-point of Chapel Lane and deploy the remainder of the men up and down the main street.

Meanwhile Mr. Flanagan, who had dropped off to

sleep beside Clarence's bed, awoke from a dream in which he had been assisting at an earthquake. As he grasped the chair with both hands the noise still thundered in his startled ears. A sharp crash, followed by another and another, wakened him thoroughly. When he stood up he glanced at the bed. Clarence lay quietly asleep, his face towards the wall.

In the kitchen Mr. Flanagan found Mr. Gilligan looking very pale, his hand on the head of Patsy, who was clinging to him. In a dark corner Mrs. Flanagan sat rocking herself to and fro. Her hands were doubled on her knees. She was moaning. There was another crash of glass, followed by shouting and a rush of many feet.

"What——" gasped Mr. Flanagan.

"Daddy, daddy," cried Patsy, rushing to his father, who mechanically took him by the hands, "they're goin' to break down the house an' murder us! Go for the polis, daddy!"

"What——" said Mr. Flanagan again, gazing at Mr. Gilligan over Patsy's head.

"The gossoon," observed Mr. Gilligan, hastily, "has sinse beyond his years. I'll go for the polis mesilf."

"But what——" repeated Mr. Flanagan. "I'm in a quandaairy."

His wife beat her knees.

"He doesn't know," she exclaimed. "They can break his house down, an' tear the roof from his wife an' child, an' he doesn't know an' he doesn't care! It's changelins he's thinkin' iv, an' it's changelins he wurruks for day an' night, though he knows black luk folls thim an' thim that go nixt or nigh thim. It's come at last, the scatthermint an' the distruction; the

house is gone now. I slaved meself to the bone to kape me innicint child that I reared an' bared wid the love iv a heart-brokin mother. But what was the good iv it all, the sthrivin' an' dhrivin', to be dhriven out in the cowl'd wurruld wid the house scaththered an' battered about me ears. God have pity on me an' me innicint child !"

Having turned up the collar of his coat to cover his ears, Mr. Gilligan solemnly laid a hand on his friend's shoulder.

"I'll slip out be the back," said he, "an' see iv I kin git the polis to stop this. God purtect us all this night !"

There was another rush of feet, with a crash of broken glass. Mr. Gilligan turned paler.

"There's no time to be lost," he whispered. "I'll stan' by you to the last."

"What's the manin' iv it ?" asked Mr. Flanagan.

"Whisht," whispered Mr. Gilligan, glancing towards Mrs. Flanagan, "shure it's a long road has no turnin'."

"Patsy, agra, stop shakin'," said Mr. Flanagan, under his breath. "Glory be t' God, what's happenin' at all at all ?"

Clarence began to call. Mr. Flanagan undid Patsy's arms, which were round his leg.

"Come to me, me innicint child !" exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan, as she noticed the action. "Iv yir cast off be an unnatheral father for the sake iv a changelin', come to me, me innicint child !"

"Margit," observed Mr. Flanagan, gravely, "them's bitthier wurruds an' undisarved. I've brought bad luk on you. Yiv a lot to bear. But I'll just go up now an' see what Misther Clarence wants, an' dhin——"

"Come to me, me innicint child !" cried Mrs. Flanagan.

"I thried to kape the roof over you, an' I worked for you till the flesh was worrin off me bones like a thrue mother. Come here, me cherrib; come to yir own mother, for we've no home now!"

"Margit——" began Mr. Flanagan. But Clarence calling him again, he went upstairs, more from force of habit than inclination. He found the patient sitting up in bed gazing wildly towards the door.

"What is the matter?" asked Clarence.

Mr. Flanagan softly closed the door.

"Whisht, alanna," said he, "lie down an' go aslape. It's only some gossoons wid catapults."

Clarence sank back on the pillows.

"Is that all?" said he, relieved.

"Catapults," observed Mr. Flanagan, "shud be put down wid a sthrong hand, though I was a boy mesilf wanst. Go to slape, an' kape the roof—I mane the quilt—over you. God forgive us all our sins. Amin!"

"Have they broken the windows?" asked Clarence, drowsily.

"Brokin the windas, sur? Shure I tould her I tuk the blame, an' what more does she want? A woman's a conthrairy article, no matther how you take thim. There's no plaisin' thim. Moilin' an' toilin'. Shure don't I fade the pigs, an'—— A pane or two here or there, what does it matther iv yiv a few ould newspapers?"

Clarence had dropped off to sleep. When Mr. Flanagan stole down again to the kitchen he found himself there alone. The back door stood open. The shop was in darkness. Upstairs he searched one room after another, the broken glass crackling under his boots. Descending to the yard he peered into the darkness, calling his wife's name softly. Then he shouted "Patsy!"

until his voice broke. He could only see the faint outlines of the walls as he made his way through the lane out to the street, which was by this time deserted. He found Mr. Gilligan's house closed for the night. When he returned he stood looking up at the smashed windows. It was past midnight. A young constable came from the shadow of the doorway.

"Misther Flanagan, is that yirself? This is bad wurruk, sur."

"It is that, constible. It's not what I ixpicted in me native town."

"Ay, it's on-nayborly," assented the constable, sympathetically. But, shure it's the blaggards did it, an' there's not a town in the wurruuld that hasn't thim."

"But what spite have they taken agin me?"

The young constable thoughtfully scratched his cheek, hesitating to reply.

"Well, Misther Flanagan, as far as we kin larn, scarlit-fayvir has brokin out."

"Scarlit-fayvir? What, in the name iv God's that to do wud breakin' the windas?"

"Misther Flanagan," replied the constable, gravely, "I'll tell you now what scarlit-fayvir has to do wud the breakin' iv yir windas. It's thought that the scarlit-fayvir broke out among the childher bekase yiv got a changelin' in yir house. That's the long an' short iv it."

Putting his hand to his brows Mr. Flanagan remained for some moments with his mouth open.

"The poor, ignirant cratures," said he.

"You may well say that, sur. Anyhow, changelin' or no changelin', we'll not have this disthruccion iv property goin' on. We've a dozen or so locked up, an' there'll be special min on jooty here till the matther

settles down. I'll be here meself till four in the mornin'."

"Well, thank you, constible, for yir information. You didn't see me wife an' little Patsy about?"

"Aren't they at home wid you?"

"I'm afeared they've lift me, but plase God it's only wan iv Mrs. Flanagan's fits. She'll come round an' come back."

"Arra, iv coorse she will!" said the constable, cheerfully. "She's frightened a bit, an' shure that natheral enough."

Mr. Flanagan sighed.

"Ay, plase God. Good-night, constible, an' thank you."

"I'll kape me eye out for the missis, sur. Good-night!"

Through the long hours of the night Clarence rested well, but Mr. Flanagan feverishly wandered about the premises. Sometimes he stood gazing out at the street through a broken pane upstairs, listening to the constable so slowly pacing up and down. He returned to his chair in Clarence's room, where, until morning, he succumbed to light dozes, starting wide awake, only to hear the quiet breathing of the sleeper and the measured footfall on the path.

When day broke he crept downstairs to light the kitchen fire. His feet seemed too heavy. The pigs clamoured in vain to be fed. Evening came round, and with it Mr. Gilligan. The two friends sat for some time in melancholy silence before the fire, which threw their shadows on the walls.

"Frind Flanagan."

"Ay, Jo," observed Mr. Flanagan, wearily.

"Yill have to get rid iv that patient iv yours."

"How so, Jo?"

"I don't know how so, but I'll tell you why. I'm not the man to give you any advice that 'ud do you harrum."

"You nivir wor, Jo."

"Git rid iv yir patient. I'm not goin' to argue as to whither he's a changelin' or not a changelin'. That's not the pint. But this I'll say—you nivir had an hour's good luk sinse he set fut inside this house. Is this truth or is it falsehood?"

"I've bin onlucky. There's no denyin' it. But it isn't Misther Clarence's fault. . . . Shure, the poor boy hasn't a frind in the wurruld, an' when I think that some day Patsy might be like that—— No, Jo, I won't lit Misther Clarence die, with the help iv God."

Sitting back in his chair Mr. Gilligan stared severely at his friend.

"Yir a crushed man, Pathrick Flanagan."

Mr. Flanagan moodily hung his head.

"Pathrick Flanagan, yir well-nigh a ruined man."

Mr. Flanagan made no reply. Mr. Gilligan pointed a long forefinger steadily at him.

"I'll tell you why. You take this young man— changelin' or no changelin', I'll say nothin' on that—but you take him in. An' what's come to you since? Bad luk has shadda'd you. Yir shop's shut up, yir wife an' child's gone, an' yir fadin' away."

With a trembling start Mr. Flanagan raised his head.

"Fadin' away?" he repeated.

"Pathrick Flanagan," said Mr. Gilligan, in a low, solemn voice, "you sit there the ghost iv a man. I see you wid me own eyes fadin' away. That suit's miles too big for you."

"It's wake I am. I haven't had bite or sup for two days."

"Yir fadin' away," repeated Mr. Gilligan, sternly. "But there's worse nor that comin' on yir head, or I'm much mistaken.

Mr. Flanagan rose to his feet.

"Have you heard anything wrong about Patsy, an'—an'——"

"Sit down there. There's mystheries comin' on you bakase yir a stubborn man an' won't take advice."

Mr. Flanagan having reseated himself, Mr. Gilligan, placing his hand on his friend's knee, bent forward, saying in a deep whisper :

"Who's the man that's come to the town ?"

Mr. Flanagan turned bewildered eyes on the other's mysterious face.

"I ax you," continued Mr. Gilligan, thrusting the knee aside as he sat back, "who's the man that's put up at the Commershil Hotil two days ago, dhressed in black from head to fut wid a yalla face an' a black bag?"

"A black bag?" repeated Mr. Flanagan, aghast.

"A black bag," said Mr. Gilligan, solemnly ; "as black as the sole iv me boot. A man that nivir ses a wurrud to any wan, an' goes about an' walks about as iv he owned the town, an' axes——"

"A black bag!" murmured Mr. Flanagan, gazing vaguely at the fire.

"An' axes about Misther Clarence Maguire."

Starting, Mr. Flanagan turned in his chair.

"Axes about Misther Clarence?"

Mr. Gilligan shook his head up and down.

"I've tould you now, what's comin' to you. I don't say I belave in black people or anywan comin' to claim changelins ; cuttin' out clothes is the line I go in for. But whin I find a man like that comin' all iv a sudden into the town an' wantin' to know nothin'

ixcept about Misther Clarence Maguire, I say to mesilf, ' Joseph Gilligan, kape clear iv that house, for there's a curse upon it.' ”

“ You won't lave me, Joseph ? ” exclaimed Mr. Flanagan, starting up as his friend deliberately rose.

“ I've a wife an' childher, ” observed Mr. Gilligan, “ an' though I mightn't mind bein' cursed meself, seein' that I sat on yir father's knee many a time, I've a wife an' childher to luk afther. What's comin' to you I don't know, but I've given you the best advice I can ; an' now, Pathrick Flanagan, I must lave you, though wid a sorrowin' heart ! ”

“ Yir goin' to lave me, Jo ? ” said Mr. Flanagan, in a broken voice.

Without further word Mr. Gilligan held out his hand. There was silence. As they stood grasping hands there was a loud, prolonged knock at the front door.

“ Glory be to God, ” gasped Mr. Flanagan, “ who kin that be at this time iv night ! ”

The knocking was repeated more vehemently.

“ Pathrick Flanagan, ” whispered Mr. Gilligan, “ don't open that doore. There's somethin' onnatheral about that knock. It's put the shivers down the small iv me back. ”

Despite this advice Mr. Flanagan went out. When he opened the door he staggered back. Before him stood an unknown man, dark of feature, with black clothes, a black bag in his hand.

“ Does Mr. Clarence Maguire live here ? ” asked the stranger, in a strange accent.

Mr. Flanagan faintly assenting, the stranger stepped briskly in. There was no light. Leading the way with trembling footsteps, Mr. Flanagan entered the kitchen to get a candle. The stranger was at his heels.

"There's a frind iv mine here," faltered Mr. Flanagan.

He looked anxiously round. At the same moment the white face of Mr. Gilligan without, pressed against the window, disappeared.

CHAPTER XXX

MAGIC OF MONEY

THE stranger stepped nervously back when Mr. Flanagan turned to him a bewildered stare.

"Lost anything?" suggested the gentleman.

"There was a man—no matther," observed Mr. Flanagan, passing his hand across his brows. "You want to see Misther Clarence? He's not fit to see anywan."

The stranger produced a letter from his breast-pocket.

"See?" said he. "That's from his doctor; a permit to see him. That's right enough, I hope!"

Having turned the letter slowly round and round without opening it, Mr. Flanagan gravely handed it back. He took up the lighted candle from the table. When he reached the passage he faced about. The stranger quickly thrust his hand into his pocket.

"No tricks!" he said, sternly.

Mr. Flanagan became more dazed than ever.

"I was thinkin', sur," he explained, "that mebbe I'd betther go up an' warrin Misther Clarence——"

"Up you go!"

The stranger waved his hand peremptorily towards the stairs.

"Bekase," explained Mr. Flanagan, confidentially, "it might throw him back. He's had a fling already, an' that's enough."

They proceeded in silence. At Clarence's door Mr. Flanagan turned to say "Whisht!" when the stranger repeated his action of thrusting his hand rapidly into his pocket, menacing his guide with a stern look. Clarence was awake. While Mr. Flanagan was explaining matters to him, the visitor stepped briskly to the bedside. With a start Clarence shrank towards the wall.

"Don't be alarmed," said the stranger, kindly. "I'm simply an American lawyer—Eldred Wrench, Philadelphia. My card. I came across to talk a little business with you. Your doctor says it won't hurt, and I guess it will set you up a sight better than his medicine. Now, Mister," turning sharply on Mr. Flanagan, who was listening open-mouthed, "good evening!"

Having thus dismissed Mr. Flanagan, who, after a blank stare, backed out at the door, Mr. Wrench sat down on the bed close to the little table, on which he placed his bag.

"I don't fancy that fellow," he remarked.

"Mr. Flanagan?" said Clarence, who had risen on his elbow.

"That his name? Well, I don't fancy your friend Flanagan. If I'm a judge of faces—and I have travelled pretty considerable—he's a bad lot, Flanagan."

"The best man on this earth!"

Mr. Wrench raised his eyebrows.

"So? Well, I won't quarrel with your opinion. But I'll keep my own. However, we'll get to business. What is your name?"

"Clarence Maguire."

"All right. We'll get certificates and all that later. You don't recollect your Uncle Daniel?"

As he spoke he swung one foot to and fro, his hands in his pockets.

"Uncle Dan?" said Clarence. "No, I don't recollect him. Even of my mother I have but a hazy memory. I seem to remember her—pale, auburn hair, and sad eyes. But then, I think, I confuse her with the Madonna?"

"That so? Well, that's good company, don't you think? And so you don't recollect your Uncle Daniel? Well, he recollected you. That's why I am here."

Inhaling a deep breath, Clarence lay back. He could not speak; his heart began to trouble him.

"Your Uncle Daniel was a client of ours. I knew him well. I knew all about your Uncle Daniel. He opened his heart to me."

"What kind of man was he?" asked Clarence, rising on his elbow again.

"Well, I don't think this planet held a moroser, silenter, or more unsociable man than your Uncle Daniel. Now then, Mister," as Mr. Flanagan put in his head at the door, "what's wrong with you?"

"I only wantid t' know," observed Mr. Flanagan, apologetically, "iv Misther Clarence——"

"Don't you worry about him," said Mr. Wrench, sharply. "I'll mind Mister Clarence. Just you leave Mister Clarence to me, will you?"

Mr. Flanagan abruptly withdrew.

"Your friend may be all you say," remarked Mr. Wrench, "but the further away he is the better I like him. His eyebrows are too heavy for my

fancy. Well, sir, we were talking of your Uncle Daniel——”

“Is he—dead?” asked Clarence.

The swinging foot halted. Taking a hand from his pocket, the lawyer fingered his beard, while gazing with eyes almost closed at his companion.

“Well, now, look here,” said he. “You’re an educated young man. And you put a question to me. I am not bound to answer that question. I am not a pupil of yours.”

“I did not mean to offend you. I am very sorry——”

“No! Don’t be sorry. Why should you be sorry? You haven’t injured me. If your Uncle Daniel, whom you never knew and never saw, was dead, I suppose you would say you were sorry?”

“Well,” said Clarence, hesitatingly, “I do not remember him, and——”

“Just so. Well, your Uncle Daniel is dead.”

The foot began to swing and Mr. Wrench’s hands went deep into his pockets again. Lying back on the pillow with his hand under his face, Clarence seemed to gaze far away.

“Grandfather will feel this worse than I,” he said, after a while.

“Nice old gentleman, your grandfather?”

“He is very old and very poor.”

“Ah! Lives with you?”

Clarence flushed.

“He lives in—in the bog.”

Mr. Wrench stood up to the table, opened his bag, looked at several papers, and drew out a neatly-folded document. Sitting down again he rested his elbow on the table, tapping the document against his knee. Clarence, quiet but watchful, fought against excitement.

"Your Uncle Daniel," observed Mr. Wrench, "hoped to come back to Europe and end his days here, with you. That was why you have never heard from him. He was a very peculiar man. He thought if you had expectations from him you might strike out into dissipation and debt, and make yourself unfit to be the companion he wanted in his old age. See the idea?"

Clarence nodded. Opening the document, Mr. Wrench glanced down it, then resumed :

"It was natural enough, don't you think? He was a sensible man in many ways, your Uncle Daniel. People called him 'Miser Maguire.' I told you he opened his heart to me. You see he had a heart. It surprised me, but it's a fact. Your Uncle Daniel was a miser so that you might be wealthy."

Sitting up, Clarence stretched out imploring hands.

"Ah, do not tell me any more!" he exclaimed. "Not to-night. No more to-night!"

"Well, just keep quiet a moment. Now then, you, Mister, what's on your mind now?"

Mr. Flanagan had not only opened the door, but, in his anxiety for his patient, ventured a step within the room.

"I only just wantid t' say," he observed, "that Misther Clarence is a thrifle wake yit, an' iv——"

He paused. The visitor had him by the arm.

"Look here, my good fellow," said Mr. Wrench, "we're talking about fortunes. I knew a man once who made a fortune, and do you know how?"

"I do not, dhin," returned Mr. Flanagan, submissively.

"Well, by minding his own business. Now, would you just follow his example? I'll take care of Mister Clarence, and you take care of yourself, will you? See? There's the door!"

The self-assertion gathering in Mr. Flanagan's face was dissipated by an imploring gesture from Clarence. Mr. Flanagan silently withdrew. He sat down again midway on the stairs, the candle being on the second step above. The voices in the room, growing confused, subsided to a murmur.

He awoke to find himself still on the stairs, the candle burned to the socket. When he went upstairs Clarence was gazing wildly at the door.

"I have called you a dozen times, Mr. Flanagan!"

"A doz——"

"Listen," said Clarence, eagerly. "Was there any one here to-night? A stranger?"

Having stared at his patient Mr. Flanagan turned about, gazing round the room.

"Was there?" repeated Clarence, anxiously.

Remarking that he felt weak, Mr. Flanagan sat down tremblingly on the bed.

"He cudn't," he added, putting his hand to his head, "have got up the chimbley, nor yit out iv the winda? I've not bin a saint, naythur have I bin a winebibber or dhrunkhard. I might ha' done me jooty in this wurruld betther nor I did, but I done me bist, an' may the Lord have marcy on me sowl!"

"Don't you hear what I am asking you?" insisted Clarence, despairingly. "Did a man in black come into this house?"

With his gaze fixed on the ceiling, Mr. Flanagan sat grasping the bedclothes.

"Whin I was a gosoon, like Patsy," said he, "I stole apples, an' mitched, an' mebbe I gev me poor ould mother a bad time. An' iv it worn't for Patsy now, I cud face the wurrust. Glory be to God! Amin—so be it!"

Sitting up, Clarence stretched out his arms.

"Mr. Flanagan," he implored, "look at me. Only answer my question. Was there——"

Crossing himself, Mr. Flanagan bent his head in silent prayer.

"Quick—tell me," exclaimed Clarence, "or I shall go mad!"

Clutching his head with both hands he sank back with a groan on the pillow. Rising, Mr. Flanagan solemnly approached him.

"Lie quiet, sur," said he, "or yill do yersilf some harrum. We're in the han's iv God!"

For a short while Clarence lay still; then, suddenly turning, he seized his companion's arm.

"It is true! He was here and told me. Told me that my Uncle Dan was dead——"

Crossing himself again, Mr. Flanagan groaned.

"And left me half a million of money!"

"We're in the han's iv God," observed Mr. Flanagan, sadly.

"What's that?" cried Clarence.

Shrinking back from the bed, Mr. Flanagan gazed wildly round at the open door.

"Something has fallen from the bed!" exclaimed Clarence.

In the effort to look down he would have fallen out if Mr. Flanagan had not caught him, placing him gently back on the pillows. There he lay panting while Mr. Flanagan, having picked up a blue document, read slowly, "Last will an' testymint iv Daniel Maguire."

He softly approached. Clarence lay smiling strangely with his eyes closed.

"It is true," he murmured.

There was a profound sigh from Mr. Flanagan.

"It is thrue, sur," said he, "a'fter all. An' may God be praised, for we're not in the han's iv min in this wurruld. Yill nivir want frinds no more, glory be t' God!"

Opening his eyes, Clarence stretched out a hand which Mr. Flanagan grasped.

"I shall never find a friend," said Clarence, "like you!"

"Mebbe," suggested Mr. Flanagan, hastily, "yid betther have a slape now, for you must git well t' inj yir money. I'll place this dokkymint undher yir pillar, an' you kin rade it whin you wake in the mornin'. An' I'd like to go down meself an' git ragin' dhrunk, but I won't! I'll take a pipe, praises be to the Lord for all His marcies. Good-night, sur, an' may you live long to inj yir money!"

Clarence pressed his hand. Having turned down the lamp, Mr. Flanagan stole out. He stumbled over the last steps of the stairs, and called up to say that he was not hurt, he was all right, thanks be to God, and Clarence was to sleep well. After this he sat over the kitchen fire smoking, and occasionally pausing to wipe the tears from his eyes with the tail of his coat.

Two nights later he was dozing in the same chair when the latch of the back door was gently raised. Putting in his head, Mr. Gilligan looked cautiously round. There was no lamp, but the fire redly glowed on the sleeper's sunken face. Mr. Gilligan stepped softly in. Stretching across to reach a chair he stumbled. Mr. Flanagan awoke.

"It's me, me frind," explained Mr. Gilligan, in a loud whisper. "Don't be onaisy."

Having dazedly risen, Mr. Flanagan sat down again,

passing his fingers through his hair while staring confusedly about.

"Is that Misther Gilligan?"

"'Jo' t' you."

Seating himself, Mr. Gilligan leaned forward, pressing a hand on his friend's knee.

"'Jo' t' you,' he repeated.

Drawing his knee aside from the caress, Mr. Flanagan tightened up his coat.

"A fine-weather frind," he remarked.

"Don't say that!" exclaimed Mr. Gilligan. "Don't use thim tarms, Pat, for they cut me to the heart!"

Tightly gripping the arms of the chair Mr. Flanagan sat forward gazing intently into the fire, which seemed, after some moments, to hurt his sight, for he sat back again, passing his sleeve hurriedly across his eyes.

"I've bin disarted," he observed, "in me hour iv nade be me wife an' child. The frind that ought to have stuck to me in me hour iv nade disarted his post."

"I've come back to it," said Mr. Gilligan.

"Too late. That's the cruel thruth. I'll nivir," said Mr. Flanagan, holding his knees as he shook his head at the fire, "doubt the brain power iv Joseph Gilligan, but his heart's not fair an' square."

"May God forgive you, Pathrick Flanagan, for thim wurruds."

"They're harrd wurruds, but I've had me harrd ixpariance. An' whin I find me fair weather frinds disartin' me in me hour iv nade an' comin' back whin there's talk iv money in the air, I kape me thoughts t' mesilf."

Rising indignantly, Mr. Gilligan folded his arms.

"Pathrick Flanagan," said he, "I scorn that obsir-

vashin. It's onworthy iv you, an' whin you think it over yill rigit it. It's throe I heard talk iv Misther Maguire's fortune, but I'd med up me mind to come back to you an' beg yir forgivniss on me two bindid knees long before. But I see now that yir goin' to be a rich man—as you disarve to be, an' plase God you will be—but it's growin' too proud y'are to know yir ould frinds——”

“Stop there, now !” exclaimed Mr. Flanagan, stretching out his hand. “That'll do now, Joseph. I'm not a rich man, an' I don't hope ivir to be wan. What I've done for Misther Clarence I've done widout wages, an' I'd do the same agin on the same tarms. It's not thinkin' iv money I am, Joseph, wid me wife an' child out on the cowl'd roadside. God forgive her for the wrong she done me !”

He had sunk back in his chair, covering his face in his hands. His last words were strangled with a sob. Bending over him, Mr. Gilligan gently pressed his shoulder.

“Pathrick,” said he, “I disarve all yir harrd wurruds, but yir wife an' child, thank God, are safe an' sound !”

Taking his hands from his face Mr. Flanagan half rose as he looked up.

“Safe an' sound, thank God !” repeated Mr. Gilligan. “They came straight t'me, an' me wife tuk care iv him, an' they nivir left me roof from that day to this. An' now, Pathrick, I may be a fair-weather frind, but I'll go and fetch yir wife an' Patsy this minit.”

Risen to his feet Mr. Flanagan, grasping the chair behind him, stood staring speechlessly at his friend with mouth agape.

“Kape cool, Pathrick !” exclaimed Mr. Gilligan “I'll fetch thim this minit !”

As he turned to go the door was flung open. Patsy and his mother rushed in. Patsy jumped into his father's arms, while Mrs. Flanagan sat down on the nearest chair and burst into tears.

"Go to him, Patsy!" she cried. "Go to him an' kiss him, an' nivir lave him while there's a shirt on yir back or a shoe to yir fut! Oh, what have I done to lave the bist man that ivir walked the earth? He'll nivir forgive me, an' I don't disarve it, I don't disarve it!"

Without a word Mr. Flanagan sat down, holding Patsy to his breast, his parted lips against the boy's hair.

"Oh, daddy, daddy dear," sobbed Patsy, "don't lit me ivir go away agin from you! I didn't want to go——"

"No, anjil," said his mother, "you didn't. It was yir wickid mother brought you, an' well she knows it! Well she knows it, to her sorra an' her grief. It's a bad mother she's bin an' a bad wife, an' the thought 'll harry me to me dyin' day, an' go wud me down into the cowl'd, cowl'd grave!"

"Oh no, daddy, don't let me go away agin," sobbed Patsy, clinging hard to his father.

"Patsy," said Mr. Flanagan, hoarsely. "Patsy, agra, achushla machree!"

"Me own daddy," said Patsy, with his little arms around his father's neck. "Me own darlint daddy!"

There was a choking sensation in Mr. Flanagan's throat. He murmured, "Mavourneen," and "alannah," over and over again.

Having effaced himself for some time in the darkest corner, Mr. Gilligan ventured to come softly forward.

"There's a place for ivrything an' ivrything in it's

place," he observed; "an' this is not the place for Joseph Gilligan. But before I go, Pathrick, I'll ax you, for the sake iv ould times an' bekase I've sat on yir father's knee, I'll ax you, Pathrick Flanagan, to take back yir wife till death do you part, wud God's help, an' say no more about it."

Mr. Flanagan stretched out a hand.

"Don't go, Joseph," said he. "Let Margit come over t' me."

In a moment she was on her knees beside his chair, with her hands covering her bent face.

"Don't furgive me," she exclaimed, "for I'm not worthy iv it! Lave me to me sorra till I'm carried out iv the doore, stiff an' stark, an' the green grass is growin' over me. Oh, wurra's the day, an' wurra's the day!"

Her husband laid his hand gently on her bonnet.

"Margit," said he, "yiv always bin a good wife an' a good mother——"

"Don't talk t' me like that, Pathrick, or yill break me heart!"

"Margit, say no more. I thank God yir back, Margit, an' I thank God that Patsy—Patsy, avrone, avrone——"

Presently rising, Mrs. Flanagan took off her shawl, but not her bonnet, lit the lamp and prepared supper. As she bent over the fire she turned her head to glance at her husband, and for the first time saw how aged and weak he had become. When she rose she approached Mr. Gilligan, who had again sought a dark corner.

"He's gone to a shadda," she whispered.

Glancing across towards the back of his friend, Mr. Gilligan gravely shook his head.

"Whisht!" he returned. "Talkin's no use now. Git him a cup of sthrong tay an' let him git to bed. I don't belave he's closed an eye for three wakes."

When the table was ready she made Patsy sit at it. She would not let her husband rise, but gave him a cup of tea—which he carefully nursed on his knee—and some toast placed on a chair. While Patsy told exciting stories of his adventures with little Jimmy Gilligan, his father listened with a happy smile. Mr. Gilligan approached.

"Pathrick," said he, "I'm goin' now."

They grasped hands.

"Bygones are bygones, Jo. I bear no malice to man or baste, thanks be to God; an' it's bygones are bygones all round, for I'm a new man to-night."

"It's friendship, dhin," observed Mr. Gilligan, deeply moved, "now an' for ivir an' yit agin, Pathrick, for ivir an' ivirmore, Amin."

"Amin," repeated Mr. Flanagan, reverently.

The visitor gone Mrs. Flanagan went upstairs to arrange the beds. When she returned Mr. Flanagan was nursing Patsy on his knee. She put her hand on his shoulder.

"Pathrick," said she, gently, "yir bed's riddy, achushla."

Setting the boy down, he stood up. He looked for a moment at his wife; then seizing her hands swung them apart, while an expression of ineffable joy appeared in his face.

"Back agin, Margit," he exclaimed, "in the ould home!"

He bent down suddenly and kissed her. She threw her apron over her face and burst into tears. He patted her shoulder, then led Patsy by the hand out of the kitchen. At the foot of the stairs he paused.

"Patsy," said he, apologetically, "I can't carry you on me back up to bed like ould times, bekase, ye see,

I'm a bit wake. But now that yir mother an' yersilf have come back, plase God, I'll soon be as sthrong as a horse."

He went with Patsy hand in hand up the stairs, to the soft accompaniment of Mrs. Flanagan's smothered sobs below.

CHAPTER XXXI

D'YOU KEN JOHN PEEL?

IT had been raining in the early morning. Essie crossed the yard with an apronful of wet flowers fresh from the garden. Her face wore an anxious look when she entered the house, but up the stairs she sang, "D'you ken John Peel?"—her father's favourite song, but which he had not hummed since they left their old home.

Having come down late to breakfast he was seated at the table, resting his head on his hand. The *Ballinabog Star* lay crumpled at his feet. She saw, as she entered, that he had a decanter of whiskey and glass beside him. Passing her fingers through his hair, she kissed him on the top of the head.

"Are you not well, father?"

He tossed his head to rid himself of her hand.

"I am well enough—physically."

She passed to the window, kneeling down on the floor to arrange the flowers in a glass bowl. At this task she hummed "John Peel" under her breath.

"You have not read your paper, have you, father?" she asked, looking up.

He thrust it aside with his foot.

"There is nothing in it," said he, impatiently, "but

that upstart. Every week they add thousands to his windfall. He's a millionaire this morning. Well," he added, bitterly, "he has his revenge."

Bending low over the flowers, Essie clipped the stalks.

"Are you not taking your breakfast, dear?" she asked.

"I've no appetite for breakfast. What have you got there?"

"Flowers," she answered, holding up some for him to see. "Are they not lovely? For your room."

"Flowers," he muttered. "It is easy to make a woman happy."

The flowers dropped from her grasp. Thrusting his chair impatiently aside, he paced the room with his hands behind his back.

"I am tired of this infernal life!" he exclaimed. "Buried alive! To think of it—and I might be free!"

Rising slowly she remained with her back to the window, watching him as he kicked things out of his way.

"You might be free!" she echoed.

"Covered head and ears with debt," he said. "And such debts! Paltry groceries—sugar, tea, butter! Good heavens! Sir Herbert O'Hara has to receive bills for tea and butter! I do not ever hope to get back my house, my lands, but a modest sum, regularly paid—however small—what a relief to a man's mind!"

Her face was very pale as she advanced to him, stopping him deliberately in his impatient walk by putting both hands on his shoulders.

"Father, are you tired of me?"

"Pooh, nonsense! Don't talk such stuff. Tired of you? I am, God knows, tiring of seeing you wasting away in this hole. I could stand it myself, perhaps. It

is horrible. I could submit to it. But you! Yes, Essie, you, my daughter, here in this place, killing yourself by inches. I will be candid with you. It preys upon my mind."

"But, father. Wait a minute. Don't go away. I want to ask you this : Would you rather that I went to aunts' and—and lived with them—away from you ?"

Taking down her hands from his shoulders he held them firmly against his breast while he looked steadily at her trembling face.

"Since you have asked me this question," said he, "I will answer. Yes, Essie. I would rather you lived with your aunts. It would, of course, be a great loss in one way to me—your society. I would miss your dear face and—and your pretty flowers, and all that. But, my dear—listen."

"Yes, father," said Essie, her chin on her breast, "I am listening."

"I would in a sense be relieved to think that you were living in a circle more suited to you. And you might meet some nice young fellow with plenty of money—I hope you will never marry a poor man——"

"I shall never marry any one."

"All girls say that until the right man turns up. But in any case, your aunts, dear, good old creatures—you are their idol, my dear—they will leave you money."

"Oh, father, I am not mercenary."

He kissed her hand.

"No, my darling, of course not. But your old father has to think of these things. The different life, the change of scene—God bless me, if it was only change of air, which you badly want——"

She withdrew her hands from his grasp, walking slowly to the window, where she leaned her elbow as

she gazed mournfully out at the trees drying in the sun.

"Father, since you wish me to leave you——"

He stopped his walk with an expression of horror.

"My love, now, now, is that fair? You know I do not wish you to leave me. But that is a necessity of the case. My dear child, we can write to each other. No, Essie, don't put it like that or I shall never utter another word on the subject!"

"Well, father, since you wish this—this arrangement, I shall not object."

"Now, there you go again, Essie. I don't want to command you or to force you to anything. It is for you to think the matter carefully over. I don't want——What noise is that? Those creatures downstairs are eternally quarrelling. And I cannot dismiss them! I can't pay their wages. My nerves are bad to-day, Essie; see that those people keep quiet!"

When she went out to the landing she saw a strange gentleman in black coming briskly up the stairs. Behind, Mrs. Grogarty protested.

"Shure, glowry be to God, the masther's not got his breakfast yit——"

"He won't lose his appetite, I promise you, my good woman," said the gentleman.

The sight of a stranger had startled Essie. When he arrived she was apparently composed. As he took off his silk hat she noticed that he was somewhat bald and also that he carried a black bag.

"Miss O'Hara, I presume?"

She bowed slightly.

"My name's Wrench—of Philadelphia. Can I have the pleasure of seeing Sir Herbert O'Hara on business? Sha'n't detain him long."

"I will tell him you are here, if you will excuse me a moment."

"With the greatest pleasure. Thank you !"

When she hurried back into the room she found her father with pale, expectant face turned towards the door.

"Father, a gentleman wishes to see you."

"Essie, my love," asked Sir Herbert, in a hoarse whisper, "is it a bailiff ?"

"Hush, father, I do not know. He will hear you."

"Let him come in," said Sir Herbert, with a groan.

Leaving them together with the door closed, she went up to her own room, where she flung herself on the bed, giving vent to restrained tears due to the revelation, as she supposed, of her father's eagerness to part with her. For about half an hour she remained stupefied with despair when she heard his voice below.

"Essie, my love, come here at once !"

Terrified by this summons she hurried from the room. Her father was alone ; walking up and down from fire-place to doorway, throwing his arms about, laughing, seizing himself by the hair, helping himself to the whiskey and water, and altogether in such a remarkable state of excitement, that she stood watching him with a terrible fear that he had suddenly become insane. Turning, as he raised the decanter to refill his glass, he caught sight of her.

"Come," he exclaimed, as he laid down the decanter and opened his arms, "and kiss me ! Come and kiss your old father, you witch. Ha, ha ! D'you ken John Peel at the break o' day ? Foxes and hounds ! Come and kiss me at once, girl !"

As she put her arms about his neck she looked up with terrified eyes.

"Father, dear, what is wrong? Are you not well, dear?"

He laughed loudly, thrusting her back to wag his head at her before embracing her again.

"Where is my coat and hat?" said he. "My best coat and my only hat? 'Hunt the fox from his lair in the morning'!"

Most frightened than all by these snatches of his old favourite song, she went tremblingly about, pretending to look for his coat and hat.

"Ah, there he goes!" exclaimed Sir Herbert.

Essie, turning swiftly, saw her father at the window, holding the blind aside. Hurrying across the room she looked over his shoulder. Down the path the sun shone brightly on the tall silk hat and erect figure of Wrench of Philadelphia.

"A clever man," said Sir Herbert, enthusiastically. "Wastes no words! Ah, no wonder America is what it is to-day! Essie—but I have not told you!"

Facing her, he put his hands on her shoulders, laughing down at her frightened face.

"We are to get all back again, Essie—all! House, lands, everything!"

She could not speak, but her eyes grew larger and her lips remained apart.

"Everything!" exclaimed her father. "John Peel, the fox and the hounds—What am I saying? Ah, there are some noble souls in this sordid world after all, but the noblest is Clarence Maguire!"

"Mr. Maguire, father? Then it is to him we owe——"

"We owe everything. God bless him! Wrench mentioned no names, but of course I understand. We understand each other, Wrench and I. Yes, my

darling, Mr. Maguire has bought back all and presented everything to us ! ”

Stepping aside from his grasp, she pressed her hands on her bosom, looking gravely at him. In the midst of his excitement he started at her expression.

“ On what conditions, father ? ”

“ Conditions ? ” he exclaimed. “ None ! God bless me ! Conditions ! Get my coat and hat this instant. I must go and see him at once. Conditions ? Why the young man has gratitude, that’s all. We took him in ; treated him as an equal ; made much of him when he was poor and friendless—my hat and coat—thank you, my love ! ”

She silently helped him on with the coat, but did not return the kiss with which he parted from her.

CHAPTER XXXII

A NOBLE BENEFACTOR

AS Sir Herbert O'Hara neared Mr. Flanagan's shop he observed there unusual signs of excitement. A crowd of townsfolk were gathered. Before the door, armed with a stick, Kerrigan having sergeant's stripes on his arm, marched up and down. Occasionally he halted to shout at the crowd, "Go home ow a that! What d'yiz want gapin' there?" Sir Herbert had some difficulty in forcing his way, but the keen eye of Sergeant Kerrigan caught sight of him, the result being a sudden onslaught of the stick which swept a clean road.

"Well, sergeant," said Sir Herbert, breathlessly, when he arrived, "what do all these people want?"

"What do they want, sur?" exclaimed Kerrigan, shaking his stick at them. "That's more nor I can tell you, sur, an' they don't know thimselves. Shure, wan 'ud think there was a sarkuss or a theeytre in front iv thim. Kape back ow a that! Stan' back there! D'you wish to see Misther Maguire, sur?"

Sir Herbert, who had been brushing the dust from his boots with a handkerchief, his free hand resting against the wall, looked up.

"Yes, I should be glad to see him."

"Well, sur, I think I kin manidge that for you."

Thrusting in his head at the door, he called :

"Are you there, Misther Flanagan ?"

Dressed in his Sunday clothes, Mr. Flanagan hurried out from the back parlour.

"What's the matther, sergeant ?" he inquired.

Kerrigan took him confidentially by the buttonhole.

"Sur Harbit," he whispered, "wants to see Misther Maguire, iv yill be kind enough to arrange it widout any inconvainyinse t' yirself."

Responding with a genial nod, Mr. Flanagan invited Sir Herbert to enter.

This event excited the crowd, who were further agitated by the appearance of Mr. Gilligan, who was leaving, loudly whispering to his friend, Mr. Flanagan, that he had just measured Mr. Maguire for five suits of clothes. Kerrigan flourished his stick.

"Stan' back, there," he shouted, "an' let Misther Gilligan pass."

On the footpath Mr. Gilligan turned to Kerrigan.

"These people are givin' you no ind of thrubble, sergeant," he remarked.

"Shure, there's no standin' thim at all," observed Kerrigan, in the same friendly tone.

"I've just measured Misther Maguire, sur," remarked Mr. Gilligan, "for five suits iv clothes. He has done me that honir, sergeant, an' iv you have a half-hour off to-night, I'd be glad iv yid dhrop in an' see the cloth an' have a frindly dhrink wid me."

"I'll bear that in mind, Misther Gilligan," responded the sergeant ; "it's very dacent an' neighbourly iv you."

"Not at all, not at all, me dear frind," returned Mr. Gilligan ; "yir hartily welkim !"

Kerrigan walked a few paces down the path with him.

"Did Misther Maguire," he asked, "say anythin' about me?"

Mr. Gilligan coughed behind his hand.

"He's not onmindful iv yir iffishil seal, sergeant," he replied, evasively, "an' he's bound to take notiss iv it."

"I'm glad iv that," said Kerrigan, gratefully. "He's a big man now an' kin do me a good turn."

They shook hands, parting with mutual expressions of esteem, the sergeant returning to sweep the accumulated throng with his stick.

Sir Herbert remained in the shop for some moments, until Mr. Flanagan went into the back parlour to arrange the interview. When he returned he beckoned mysteriously across the counter to Sir Herbert, whispering, "Now, sur," as if inviting the visitor to a funeral.

Sir Herbert found Clarence dressed in a new suit of black, seated in an arm-chair, looking very pale and tired. He attempted to rise, but sat down again wearily.

"Don't stir, sir," exclaimed Sir Herbert, detaining the thin hand; "I know what a trial these interviews are. You are exhausted. I sincerely trust in Providence you will not suffer any ill effects."

"Thank you," said Clarence. "My new state has brought unexpected work, but I shall survive it."

"I hope so. I shall not detain you long, for you require rest. I called," said Sir Herbert, standing beside the chair on which he rested his hand, "to say that I received the title-deeds of my dear old house and lands that I never, never hoped to see. I did not think that Heaven would so soon answer my broken-hearted

prayers. Yes, dear friend," he added, holding his handkerchief to his eyes, "broken-hearted is the word ; for I never thought, I never dared to hope, that I would ever again be restored to the proud position which I held. And I know to whose nobility of soul, to whose great heart I owe the greatest happiness of my life !"

"It was absurd of me," said Clarence, without looking up, "to think that I could remain unknown in this matter. Yes, I have attempted to make you a poor return for your kindness to me when I was poor and lonely."

"My dear friend," said Sir Herbert, with emotion, "what can I say ? How can I thank you ? God alone knows my heart and the depths of my gratitude. To my dying day——"

Clarence feebly rose. His face was flushed.

"I beg of you to say no more," said he ; "your words pain me. You were so good to me when—when I was miserable. I desire no thanks."

"I know, I understand," said Sir Herbert ; "I shall say no more at present. My daughter desired me to convey her most heartfelt thanks to you. Like myself, she has no words to express it ; but she would be glad to see you."

The red spots brightened under Clarence's eyes.

"To see me ?" he faltered.

Sir Herbert took his hand.

"Any time convenient to you, dear boy. Essie will see you to thank you in person. She awaits that moment with impatience. God knows what my poor child has suffered. But you have raised a world of sorrow from her young heart. If you could see her happy face ! God bless you !"

"I shall be glad to see her at any time," murmured Clarence, "if she desires it."

"Desires it? She wished to come with me, but I feared the excitement. She has suffered so much!"

"I shall call to-morrow at five o'clock, if agreeable."

Sir Herbert raised Clarence's hand to his lips.

"Thank you! Thank you again and again!" he exclaimed. "I shall say no more at present! My heart is too full. Essie, my darling Essie, shall speak for me. Goodbye, my dear and noble benefactor! Take care of your precious health, doubly precious now both to yourself and your friends!"

Clarence bade him goodbye, and, when he had gone, went upstairs to bed with the aid of Mr. Flanagan's arm.

When Sir Herbert reached home he sent immediately for Essie, but was informed that she was in her room ill with headache. Alone, but happy, he walked about the garden smoking a cigar. Returning again upstairs, he put on his slippers, mixed a tumbler of grog, and taking the papers and deeds from the safe, spread them on his knees as he sat down. When it grew too dark to read he laid them tenderly on the table beside him; then, placing the tips of his fingers together, crossed his legs, leaned back and delivered himself to delicious reverie.

There was a light rustle of a dress. Essie, laying a hand on his arm, knelt down beside him.

"Father."

She was pale, almost haggard; her hair, loosened to relieve the headache, was about her face and shoulders. There were red marks round her eyes.

"Ah, my dear girl," said Sir Herbert, "are you better?"

"Not much, father. I shall go to bed soon. My head is bad. But you sent for me?"

"I did not mean to disturb you, darling. I just wished to tell you that I have had a beautiful interview with that noble young fellow to whom we owe so much. It was most satisfactory, most satisfactory. Do you know, Essie, he is a perfect gentleman? Absolutely the truest and sincerest gentleman I've ever met!"

With her arm on the chair, Essie turned her face towards the fireplace without a word.

"Positively," continued her father, enthusiastically, "his manner and style are fit for any society; and as for his generosity, his noble-heartedness, that we know! And the most singular thing, Essie, my love, is that he bears all his honours so modestly, that really and truly I could not help admiring him. I do, indeed. He is certainly a remarkably modest and gentlemanly fellow. I am positively fond of him. He is coming to see you to-morrow afternoon."

"To see me, father?"

He patted her hand as she turned abruptly to him.

"Yes, my darling. I am sure you will receive him kindly. I am sure you know what my wishes are in the matter."

There was a moment's silence between them, during which they heard Mrs. Grogarty amongst the pots in the kitchen.

"Father," said Essie, "do you wish me to marry Mr. Maguire?"

"My dear," began her father, "I—the fact is—to be plain with you, Essie, I do most sincerely believe that he belongs to the real old Maguire stock. I do, indeed!"

"Father," she repeated, "do you wish me to marry him?"

"But, my love, he has not asked you yet. He may not ; one can never tell."

"Father, you are convinced in your own mind that he will propose for me to-morrow when he comes. Is that not so ?"

Stretching his head to look up at the ceiling, Sir Herbert slowly scratched his throat. Then he coughed as he looked at his daughter's earnest face.

"Yes, Essie. I shall be frank with you ; I do believe such is his intention."

"And you wish me to become his wife ?"

Lifting her hand, he pressed it to his lips.

"My child, your happiness is my sole desire on earth."

"Father, I could never be happy as the wife of Mr. Maguire. I respect and esteem him. If his gift to you—to us, is made on condition or understanding that I shall marry him——"

"My dear child, what do you mean ? Do you think I would barter you ? You wound me deeply, Essie. I have not deserved this."

She grasped his hand firmly as he sat up looking reproachfully at her.

"Listen a moment, father. If there is such an understanding, and it is your wish that I should marry him, I shall do so. But I could never love him."

"Good God, child !" exclaimed Sir Herbert, "what are you talking about ? Love ? What's this ? What girlish talk is this ? Have you not had enough of poverty and misery ? Have you not seen me degraded sufficiently ? Heavens above, how much lower do you want us to fall ?"

"Oh, do not speak to me like that, dear !" she cried,

grasping his arm. "You know how I love you, father!"

"This young man—good heavens! I shall give him his proper title—this gentleman, what is the matter with him? It is true, no doubt, he is not a paragon. He is, I admit, slightly lame. Apollo might go lame—it would not alter his character!"

She listened with bowed head as her father, grasping the chair on both sides, impatiently uttered these remarks. When he paused a moment, breathing hard between his teeth, she looked wistfully at him.

"You shall not suffer for me," said she; "I only thought it better to tell you, father, all I feel. I shall try and do my duty as you wish; as I have always—always," she added, bursting into tears, "tried to do."

Sir Herbert started up as she sank down with her hands over her face.

"Duty?" he exclaimed. "You shall not sacrifice yourself for me! If you owe me a duty as a daughter, I owe a duty to you as a father. No! Rather than see you unhappy I shall remain in poverty, though I sink lower and lower every day. Essie, we are penniless! I have never told you the whole truth before. We are absolutely penniless. But your happiness is what we must consider. Here"—seizing the documents from the table he dashed them on the floor at her feet—"send these damned things back to Mr. Maguire, and let me never see them again!"

"Don't go, father. Don't leave me!"

He had made towards the door, but she sprang up, throwing her arms round him. He stopped, gazing fiercely down at her.

"No, father. No more poverty! I shall do as you desire. Forgive me, dearest, for my foolish talk. Do

forgive me ! I shall never speak like that again. Kiss me, father dear, and say you forgive me !”

Lifting her face with both hands he raised his eyes solemnly before he stooped to kiss her.

“ My noble child ! Heaven bless you !”

She smiled up at him as he kissed her. Then when he had gone, she took up the deeds from the floor, gazing at them with stupefaction.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FIRST KISS

WHEN Clarence came into the street next afternoon the crowd was smaller than usual, but as soon as he appeared the entire town seemed to become aware of the fact. Thanks, however, to Sergeant Kerrigan, who had disposed three constables at strategical positions across the thoroughfare, Clarence was allowed to proceed without discomfort. The few who eluded the cordon followed respectfully, making remarks with bated breath, while the bulk of the people cheered his departing figure. As he neared the gate of the Red House Sergeant Kerrigan came breathlessly up.

"I'm kapin' me eye," said he, after a salute, "on thim idle, good-for-nothin' vagabinds. I'll see they don't annoy you, sur. There's a power iv idle blaggards in this town that don't know how to thrate a rale gintle-man whin they see him. Iv there's anythin', sur, yir dissatisfied with in me arrangimints, I wish yid let me know, an' I'll see to it."

"I am extremely obliged to you," said Clarence, wearily. "For your kindness——"

"I'm glad to her you say that," interrupted Kerrigan, "for I mane to git an in the Foorce, an' a gintleman in

your position, sur, cud do me a good turn iv you had the mind."

"If it is in my power to be of use to you I shall be only too happy."

"Thank you, sur. Yir a rale gintleman. It may be," added Kerrigan, reflectively, "in days gone by, you may have thought me a bit prisoomin', but I've had so many things on me mind an' all that. But I know me place now, sur, an' I'll kape me eye on it."

Clarence paused before entering the gate.

"I don't remember to what you allude," said he; "but since you have asked me to be of service to you, I shall in return ask a favour of you."

"A favir iv me, is it? Shure it's grantid before you ax."

"You have a summons," explained Clarence, "against Mr. Flanagan for serving drink after hours. He was wrong. But if it would be possible to withdraw——"

"That'll do now, sur. I dhropped it, right enough. Shure I wudn't hurt a hair iv his head. He's a dacent, industhrius man. He an' me, sur, 's the bist iv frinds."

"I am very glad to hear that. Thank you!"

"I'll throw me eye about here till you come out!" exclaimed Kerrigan, as Clarence passed through. "I'll see yir not milested be the public. Thrust t' me!"

Clarence nodded, then went slowly towards the house. As he approached, the front door was flung open. Sir Herbert, with both hands extended, came down the steps.

"Welcome, my boy, a thousand times welcome!"

Having pressed Clarence's hand with fervour, he gave him an arm up the steps.

"Essie is upstairs," he whispered confidentially, as they entered the hall, "impatiently awaiting you. My

dear boy, go to her. I shall not disturb the interview. But before you go upstairs I shall request—no, I demand, that you remain for the entire evening.”

“I have to receive a deputation,” said Clarence, mildly, “at eight from the Town Commissioners, and——”

“Oh, of course,” exclaimed Sir Herbert, who had stepped back to gaze admiringly at him, “you are a public man now, my dear friend. You are the observed of all observers. The town, the county, is at your feet. Well, I shall not interfere with your business. But stay as long or as short as you please. You are heartily welcome !”

Going to the foot of the stairs, he called out :

“Essie !”

A rustling dress upstairs set Clarence’s heart throbbing. Essie called down :

“Yes, father ?”

“Mr. Maguire is here !” exclaimed Sir Herbert, proudly.

A blush rose to Clarence’s cheeks, but without a word he mounted the stairs, leaving Sir Herbert gazing after him with admiration. Essie met Clarence as he entered. He was pale and breathless.

“Pray sit down,” said she. “You have not yet recovered fully, I fear, from your illness. But what am I to say ? How can I thank you for your kindness, your great gift to father ? I hope you will understand, that I feel and shall always feel your wonderful goodness very deeply.”

“I beg of you,” said Clarence, “do not speak of it.”

“Father has become twenty years younger,” said Essie. “I do not know how to thank you !”

“By saying nothing,” he returned, imploringly. “Oh,

how weary and tired I am of all this ! Pardon me," as Essie looked astonished, "I mean, I would rather nothing was said about it. So much has rushed upon me of late, that I am worried. Sometimes I do not know what I am saying. What I want is rest."

Having seated herself near the window, she looked across at his careworn face.

"But you must bear up," she said, gently. "Your new life brings new responsibilities. In time you will get quite used to them."

He was seated, leaning forward on his stick, his eyes downcast.

"Do you propose remaining here?" she added. "But of course not. You will go away, I suppose."

"Yes—to America."

"Oh!" For a moment she was surprised, then recollected. "Of course, I forgot; you will have to see about your business affairs there; legal transactions and such things."

"Ah, but I am going to stay there."

"Permanently?" she exclaimed.

"Until I die," he replied, sadly.

She looked through the window at the trees slightly stirring their leaves. Without turning her head, she remarked :

"You do not like this country, then?"

"Oh yes."

As he made no further remark, she said, smiling :

"I should have thought you would go to London or Paris and amuse yourself."

He looked up with such an air of reproach, that she added hastily :

"You have had such a solitary, laborious life. Now that you have so much money, it is natural to suppose

that you would enjoy yourself—begin to find life worth living.”

He shook his head.

“I shall never feel like that.”

She was silent, revolving in her mind the unexpected nature of his words. For some moments neither spoke. Then he began, in a low voice :

“It is natural that you should think I desire amusement. But it is not so. The word has no meaning for me. I want to go away somewhere to bury myself from the world. I suppose I should feel happy at all this sudden wealth. I have tried to do so. But in all my miserable life I have never been so miserable !”

He turned his face away striving to stifle his tears. Then rising, placed his hand on the wall, resting his face on his arm. Alarmed by this sign of emotion, she hurried to him.

“Do not give way like this,” said she. “I know it is only because you have been ill and are not quite strong yet. But, please, do not !”

“Thank you,” he murmured. “I beg of you to excuse me. I feel ashamed. Do not mind me.”

He began to walk about to conquer himself. She stood irresolutely watching him, unable to make up her mind as to what she should say or do. Presently, however, he came towards her, calmly and even smiling.

“You see what a baby I am,” said he. “But I know you understand. If you will allow me, I shall say good-bye now. And as we shall probably never meet again I—I shall take—take this opportunity of thanking you for all your kind——”

He put his hand over his eyes, staggering a moment as if about to fall. She took his arm, and he glanced wildly at her. She pointed mutely to a chair.

"You are ill," said she ; " I shall ring for father."

He put out his hand to stay her.

"No, no. I am all right now. But I had forgotten. I wanted to ask you something."

She had gone towards the fireplace to ring the bell, but at these words she turned with fixed face, a cold feeling at her heart.

"Yes ; what is it ?"

She pressed her nails into her palms. He waited until he regained his self-command, but did not look at her when he spoke.

"This money," said he, "left to me I do not want ; at least, what I mean is, I require but little of it. My wants are few, and when they are arranged for, and my—my grandfather comfortably settled, I desire to live the rest of my life unknown and simply safe from poverty. I want you to permit me—that is, to allow me—to offer you the greater part of it, because it is of no use to me, and it would make me happy to know it was yours."

Essie's young face hardened. Holding her hand tightly on her breast, she looked at him in silence.

"I do not quite understand," she said ; then, slowly and even coldly, "You propose to give me the greater part of your wealth. Am I to understand that it is in exchange——"

She paused, the hot blood rushing to her face. He looked up quickly, then rose, coming towards her.

"I mean that you are to accept it," he explained, hastily, "as a freely offered gift. Oh no ; nothing in exchange. Do not fancy, Miss O'Hara, do not believe, that I think this fortune has given me a right to dare to aspire to you. Oh, heavens, no ! I am what I always

was—beneath you. You are above me always, like the stars of heaven. Money cannot alter that ! No, Miss O'Hara, I am only the son of a peasant, though I had millions. You are made for your social equal. I offer you a share of my money because you were so kind to me when I was a poor, wretched school teacher. That is all ! Believe me, that is all ! I am going to America. That is my fixed resolve. Nothing can alter it. I shall never see you again !”

“Going away ?” exclaimed Essie, disturbed. “For ever ?”

Sir Herbert put his head in at the door.

“May I come in ?” he asked, smiling.

Essie ran to him.

“Father,” she whispered, “tell him not to go.”

“Is he going so soon ?”

“To America, for ever,” explained Essie.

“What—what—what do you say ?” said her father, aghast.

“Hush !” whispered Essie, glancing back.

Her father's eyes followed hers. They saw Clarence standing with his back towards them, his hand on the back of a chair, his head bent low. Essie drew down her father's face to whisper in his ear.

“Tell him, father,” said she, “I shall consent. He wants to go to America. Will you tell him ? He must not go !”

Pushing her father in, she ran upstairs. Half an hour later Sir Herbert called her. She came down. She had brushed her hair, in which she had placed a flower. Her face was radiant ; even Sir Herbert was struck by it.

“Essie, my love,” said he, when she was in the hall, “Clarence is going. No, don't be alarmed, my kitten.

Not to America. He is going to his lodgings. Clarence, dear boy, come here."

Clarence came slowly from the room, holding his hat and stick, and appearing excessively nervous. He glanced at Essie, then his eyes fell hurriedly. Sir Herbert put his hand on his shoulder.

"Clarence, my dear boy—my son," said he, "here is Essie. She is yours! I give her to you with a heart and a half. She has been the best of daughters. She will make the best of wives. I feel older to-night than I have felt for years, but never so happy! Heaven bless you both! Come boy, kiss her. She is yours. Essie!"

She gave her hand to Clarence. He put it reverently to his lips. Essie turned her face away.

"Ah," exclaimed Sir Herbert, "that is not the good old fashion. But times have changed. Clarence, dear boy, I shall say good-night. We shall expect you to-morrow. God bless you!"

When her father was gone Essie walked to the door. She stood on the step gazing at the stars until Clarence was beside her.

"I did not expect this happiness," said he.

She put out her hand without looking at him. He took it and held it.

"In my wildest dreams," he whispered, "I never imagined this. I love you beyond all expression. I have loved you all my life. Some day I shall tell you all," he added, as she looked surprised. "You have been the goddess of my life, whom I have worshipped——"

"Oh no, no," said she. "Don't talk like that. I am only an ordinary girl. Pray do not idealise me or you will be so disappointed."

"There is no beauty in life without you," said Clarence. "I never dared to tell you how I worship and adore you. I do not love you—I worship you! I would kill myself if you told me to do so. My greatest wish is to make you happy if I can. I know you—you do not love me. Why should you? But I shall be your slave——"

"You are making me miserable," said Essie, crying. "I wish you would not say these things!"

He looked at her, when she took her hand away to put it to her eyes. He saw her distinctly in the moonlight, even to the flower in her hair.

"Oh, my God, how beautiful you are!" he murmured. "How happy I am. But forgive me. Good-night. May I call you 'Essie'?"

"Yes, Clarence."

"Good-night, Essie."

He repeated her name so fondly that she turned her face towards him with a smile. He suddenly held out his arms to her.

"Essie," he cried, wildly, "Essie, Essie!"

"My poor boy," whispered Essie, moved by his emotion.

Next instant he had kissed her; then hurried away. She watched him until he turned to look back at her. Waving her hand to him she ran into the house.

CHAPTER XXXIV

TRIUMPHAL ARCHES

CLARENCE went to America, where he remained three months. His return was announced in *The Ballinabog and County Star* as follows :—

“The people of Ballinabog, and, indeed, of the entire county, will rejoice to learn, that, owing to our exclusive sources of inspiration, we are enabled to state that our famous and generous townsman, Mr. Clarence Maguire, will return to his native town on Tuesday evening, prior to his marriage with the lovely and accomplished Miss Essie O’Hara, only daughter of Sir Herbert O’Hara, J.P., D.L., which auspicious event will take place in the town. Need we say, that our wealthy and popular young townsman will receive an hundred thousand welcomes at the hands of our numerous readers? Preparations have already been made to accord him a right royal welcome home; and we are happy to state that, owing to Mr. Maguire’s personal interest in this journal, and expressed wishes for our prosperity, our circulation has largely increased, a fact which our advertisers will do well to note. . . .”

Clarence was met at the station by the people.

When the train arrived the pressure of the crowd broke the cordon of police. The platform became crowded. The porters assisted the police to stem the throng. Sir Herbert O'Hara, who had travelled with Clarence from an intermediate station, stood inside the door of a first-class carriage. The people, still struggling with the police, cheered when they saw him. Sir Herbert turned to speak with some one inside. Everybody knew he spoke to Clarence. The struggles redoubled. The voice of Head Constable Kerrigan was heard above the noise, urging his men to further efforts. He, himself, forcing his way to the carriage as the train stopped, opened the door. Sir Herbert had stepped out. Behind him appeared Clarence, with soft travelling cap and fur-lined overcoat, his face bronzed with travel.

"Take my arm," shouted Sir Herbert to him. "Be calm, my boy. Now then, my friends, make a path for Mr. Maguire!"

Those near pressed close to welcome Clarence, who shook hands until his arm ached. A lane was made. The police, taking advantage of this, surrounded Clarence and Sir Herbert. Head Constable Kerrigan went before them, pushing back the people.

When the distinguished couple appeared on the road without, the larger crowd there blended their voices in a hurricane of yells. Clarence, holding fast to Sir Herbert's arm, paused on the steps while the police made a way to the carriage. He saw the upturned faces lit by the torches, of which hundreds were waved on high. He heard his name shouted rapturously from end to end of the town. His eyes filled with tears.

Kerrigan hurrying back, shouted :

"Now, sur. This way, sur!"

They followed. Clarence was lifted into Sir Herbert's carriage. On the box sat Mike Rafferty in livery. Mike had turned on the seat to watch his master with Clarence and the Chairman of the Town Commissioners enter, then gathered up the reins. The two splendid chestnut mares reared as Mike touched them with the whip. Head Constable Kerrigan, with admirable presence of mind, seized the bridle.

"Thank you, Head!" cried Mike.

"Yir welkim, Mike!" shouted Kerrigan.

The carriage moved on. The Ballinabog Brass Band went in front playing "See, the Conquering Hero." Immediately behind the carriage the Ballinabog Fife and Drum Band played a choice selection of Irish melodies. Following marched a procession of several hundred torch-bearers. They were flanked by police. Around surged the people, shouting themselves hoarse. Ballinabog had never seen the like before.

"Stand up, my boy," exclaimed Sir Herbert, "and let them see you!"

Clarence stood up in the carriage bareheaded, Sir Herbert holding him firmly by the coat-tails. The thoroughfare was spanned with ropes of flags and triumphal arches. Women, children, and old men crowded the windows. The women cried with joy, waving hands and handkerchiefs as Clarence came in sight, bowing and smiling all the way. The carriage made slow progress, but the music, the flare of the torches, and the universal excitement made the distance from the station to the hotel too short for all. At last, when the hotel was reached, Clarence was lifted from the carriage to the steps. Sir Herbert stood beside him. Behind were grouped deputations from the

Town Commissioners, Board of Guardians, and local societies. Beneath, on the path, the police, under the indefatigable Kerrigan, mustered in force. The street was thronged. The bands halted, but continued to play louder than ever; the torches, wildly waved, scattered streams of sparks over the heads of the people. Having responded to the addresses, Clarence spoke a few words of thanks to the townsfolk, but no one heard a word. He did not even hear himself. He was only dimly conscious that he was speaking, that the light of the torches was flashing in his eyes, the people roaring, and the bands playing.

When he got inside the hotel at last he had a faint consciousness of seeing Mrs. Flanagan crying and curtseying, holding a handkerchief to her mouth and Patsy by the hand. The hall was crowded. Clarence went up the stairs with the proprietor and servants in front, Sir Herbert, the Town Commissioners, the Board of Guardians, the Editor and staff of the *Star* and many others following. The largest room was arranged for the supper. The central table was laid for sixty guests, the side tables accommodating twenty more. There were numerous lights and a profusion of flowers. Below, in the hall, the brass band serenaded.

Clarence, having changed his clothes upstairs, soon came down to take his place at the head of the table. Sir Herbert was on his right, the Chairman of the Town Commissioners on his left. The bustle of the supper began. Fifteen waiters attended. In due course there was a cry for silence, emphasised by knocking the ends of glasses on the tables, when Sir Herbert was observed standing behind a pot of flowers, proposing the health of Clarence. After some flattering allusions to the culture and amiability of his "dear son-in-law, as he

might call him," he stated that he had known him intimately, thank Heaven, for years ; he had probed the deepest recesses of the heart of their honoured host and found there nothing but the glittering gold of virtue, manliness, honour, and truth ! (Great applause.) He ended by referring in touching terms to Clarence's approaching marriage with his daughter, his darling child, whose happiness, which was his sole desire, was now assured in the keeping of his illustrious, noble-hearted and noble-minded son-in-law, Mr. Clarence Maguire. Sir Herbert finished in tears. The entire room of guests, jumping to their feet, drank the health with enthusiasm. Clarence responded briefly. Sir Herbert's health was then proposed, the Chairman of the Town Commissioners health, the health of the Editor of the *Ballinabog and County Star*, who stated in reply that there never had been so illustrious, so magnanimous, so magnificent a citizen of Ballinabog as the distinguished young gentleman whom they had assembled that night to honour ; after which every one proposed the health of every one present, and as many absent friends as they could remember. The health of the bride-elect was proposed no less than nine times. The speech-making became occasionally confused, several persons being on their feet at the same time, proposing, or seconding, or returning thanks. The side tables started a series of independent healths. Even Mr. Flanagan, who had been all the evening tightened up in a white shirt and a new dress suit made by his friend Mr. Gilligan, was forced to his feet and began : "Sir Clarence, Misther Harbit, ladies and gintlemin, I'm not goin' to say a wurrud bekase why ? I'm no scholir. But Misther Clarence knows what I think iv him, and what I always thought of him, thanks be to

God! Me friend Jo Gilligan's the man to talk. Get up an' do the talkin' for me, Jo!"

Mr. Gilligan instantly responded, although he had already made a dozen speeches to which no one listened. But he was understood by his adjacent friends to say : that for a gentleman who was the pink iv pilitness, give him Misther Clarence O'Hara. He was not, in that assimby, anxious to make invijis kimparisins, ispecially wid city houses, but let Misther Clarence O'Hara permit him, widout the laste iffinse, to draw attintion to the fact that he had misured him for five suits iv clothes which had given ivry satisfacshin to the surroundin' nobility and gentry. Wid rivirence to his dear frind, his buzzum frind, his lifelong frind, Misther Pathrick Flanagan, all he wud say, iv he might be pirmitted the liberty, was that he knew his father. (" Didn't I, Pat ?" " You did, Jo. Sit down now, Jo !")

It was after midnight when a strange desire seized Clarence. He had looked anxiously about for his grandfather, but there was no sign of the old man. In the height of the festivity Clarence quietly withdrew. He went upstairs, put on his cap and overcoat, and left by a back door. He heard the people still shouting in the streets as they watched the brilliant windows of the hotel. The torches flared ; the bands still played. He made his way, unnoticed, through the back lanes, until he left the town. Then, along the road lit by the moon, he hurried towards the bog.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE DEATH-TICK

ALL that day old Peter Maguire had heard the tapping of an insect in the wall—the messenger which, to the superstitious peasant, foretells an approaching death. In the evening, when the sound of the bands came across the bog, the old man went to the door to listen. He remained there until the white mists had slowly ebbed away under the rising moon. He saw a figure coming towards him across the bog. He shaded his eyes, breathing hard. Then he began to tremble. It was his grandson.

“It is I, grandfather!” exclaimed Clarence, as he arrived. “I have come to ask you for the twentieth time to my wedding. I shall not return without you.”

“Come in,” said the old peasant, hoarsely—“come in, in the name iv God.”

When they entered Clarence looked around. The turf fire burned on the hearth. He stirred the embers with his stick, then looked long at the blackened rafters, the whitewashed walls, the poor earthen floor.

“A miserable place, grandfather,” said he; “but you will spend your last days in comfort.”

“It’s a poor place, thrue for you,” returned his grand-

father. "But I've lived here now for many a year, an' please God I'll die here."

"You don't suppose," said Clarence, "that I'll live in a big house and leave you here? You don't think I'd do that, grandfather?"

As he sat down on the three-legged stool he looked up eagerly at the old man.

"Ay, ay," said his grandfather. "Ye can injy yir money. But, praises be to God, I'll stay where I am."

Clarence gazed thoughtfully into the fire until roused by the movements of the old man, who was about to prepare a light.

"No, don't do that, grandfather," he said, hastily. "Don't light the candle. It's more like old times as it is."

His grandfather blew out the match, which he flung on the floor. There was a long silence, during which the old man started as he heard the death-tick beginning its ominous monotone once more. He gazed at Clarence's face redly lit by the glow of the turf, but there was no evidence in the young man's expression that he heard the sound so audible to the old peasant.

He came nearer to look into his grandson's face, when Clarence, starting from his reverie, smiled at him.

"What is it, grandfather?" he asked, softly.

"Don't you hear it?" whispered the old man, raising his hand.

"Hear what?"

"H'sh! It's gone. No matther. It's nothin' at all. Wud you like a cup iv tay?"

"No, grandfather. I have had supper. I am tired and worn out. Grandfather, you'll think it queer of me, what I'm about to say. But I want to sleep in the old settle bed to-night."

His grandfather, turning pale, stood trembling before him.

"In the ould bed?" he said, in quavering voice.

"Ay," returned Clarence, sadly, "in the bed where mother nursed me."

There was silence. The death-tick began again. The old man's jaw dropped as he listened.

"Yes," said Clarence, wearily, "I thought I would like to come to the old place just once again. It came into my head, and here I am."

"In the ould bed?" muttered the old man. "I'll get it ready. Ay, ay. It's come about as she said. In the ould bed. H'sh! It's not my doin'. It's come about!"

In a short time the bed was ready. But they sat down again before the fire, Clarence in front, with the light on his face, the old man in the dark shadow at the side with his back against the wall and the death-tick beating louder and louder over his head. Clarence spoke of the happy future and his determination to share it with the old man.

"For we are the only two left now, grandfather!"

But the old man said never a word. At last Clarence, wearied by the excitement of the day, partially undressed and lay down on the bed where, for some time, he still spoke, until by degrees his voice became uncertain and his eyes, fixed on the fire, grew closed in slumber. For some time the old man sat listening to the regular breathing of the sleeper until the death-tick began to grow fainter and fainter. The old peasant following the sound, was stricken with awe as it became located over the head of the sleeper.

An hour or more passed. The old man, who had been sitting on the stool, stood up. The fire had shrunk to a mere handful of embers. He went to a

corner where, after some search, gazing fearfully from time to time towards the figure on the bed, he drew forth a rope. Still watching the sleeper, he crept to a shelf where he found the long, sharp knife.

With the rope in one hand, the knife in the other, he stood near the bed, peering at Clarence and listening to the ever-increasing beat of the death-tick, now like a great drum in the cabin. The moon glimmered fitfully through the little window on the face and figure of the sleeper. The old man, laying the knife down on the stool, made a running loop on the rope. He crept towards the bed. Putting his arms round Clarence's shoulders he lifted him up to slip the rope under him. Clarence, opening his eyes, smiled as he saw his grandfather's face close and felt the panting breath on his cheeks.

"Settling the pillow, grandfather? I'm all right."

He closed his eyes, but almost immediately opened them again, murmuring:

"Thank you, grandfather. I'm all right. I——"

Becoming conscious of the tightening feel about his arms, Clarence opened his eyes wider than before.

"What is the matter, grandfather?"

The old man tightened the rope again, then straightened himself, holding the slack part of the rope and looking down at Clarence, into whose face an awful expression of fear began to creep. He attempted to sit up, but his arms were bound. At the same instant the old man, pressing his hand on Clarence's breast, thrust him back, saying hoarsely:

"Lie down where y'are."

There was no more sleep for Clarence. He was wide awake now.

"Grandfather, what is this?"

The terrible expression in the old man's face made Clarence's heart throb against the tightened rope.

"Are ye me gran'son, in the name iv God?" shouted the old man suddenly.

"Yes, grandfather, yes! Don't you know me?"

"Ye lie, changelin'!" exclaimed the old man. "Be the signs an' tokins on ye an' about ye, ye lie! Fly up the chimblly, changelin', an' let me gran'child come in through the doore!"

"O God," groaned Clarence, "I am lost!"

He turned his eyes wildly towards the door, then to the window, in the frenzied hope of rescue. The old man bent to take the knife from the stool. With the sudden energy of despair, Clarence, sitting up, strove to burst his arms free. The old man, with a furious tug of the rope, dragged him to the floor. There Clarence, face downward, struggled madly for his life, shrieking for help and imploring mercy. His grandfather, with the knife in his right hand, flung himself on him, forcing him round. Clarence saw the wild eyes and working face above him.

"Grandfather, you would not murder me! You would not——"

"Away, changelin'!"

Repeating these words in a furious voice, the old man raised the knife and plunged it into Clarence's naked throat.

Then he rose. Clarence gave one low moan, his body heaved once and then lay still. He was dead.

The old man, holding the knife, rushed to the door, flung it wide and stretched out his arms. The knife dropped to his feet. And thus he remained, waiting for the child of his insane brain. The bands in the town had ceased playing under the triumphal arches,

but the sky was still reddened with the glow of the bonfires.

Leaving the banquet early in the morning, Sir Herbert drove home and went to bed. He rose late, and, after a light breakfast, had a gallop. When he returned he knocked at Essie's door with a hunting-crop.

"Oho!" he exclaimed, entering, "where is the beautiful bride? I have not seen her to-day. Look at me! 'D'you ken John Peel with his coat so gay? D'you ken John Peel at the break o' day?"

Having shouted this refrain several times he smacked his riding boot with the crop. Essie was standing before a mirror clasping a bracelet on her wrist. There were red marks under her eyes as if she had been recently weeping.

"You are growing younger, father," she said.

"'D'you ken John Peel,'" roared Sir Herbert, "'at the break o' day, start the fox from his lair in the morning!' Younger? I'm a boy again. 'The fox from his lair in the morning!' Why don't you get on your mare and have a run, to put some colour in your face? What have you been doing all the morning? Ah, I see." He pointed his crop at the trinkets on the dressing-table. "Getting the trousseau ready. Woman again! Always the same! Dress and ornaments. 'D'you ken John Peel at the break o' day!' Well, girl, you will have a generous husband, anyhow."

He pointed again at the table, but she turned away as if the sight of the finery pained her.

"He is far too generous," said she. "Here is the bracelet I received yesterday."

She held out her arm which he took daintily, striking an attitude of amazed admiration at the jewels.

"It takes the sight out of my eyes!" he exclaimed. "It will strike every woman in the county dumb with envy. Happy girl! 'At the break o' day with the fox and the hounds in the morning!' A noble fellow, Clarence!"

"And those boxes over there, father. Do you see them? They are full of lovely things. I have not had time to see half of them. And I had a letter too. He says "his only wish," she sat down sobbing, "is—is to make me ha—happy!"

"Then be happy, confound you! What more do you want? A husband that worships the ground you walk on, and wants to pave it with rubies and sapphires and emerald gems! Ay, and he is able to do it, which is better than all. God bless him!"

"Oh, father," she exclaimed, starting up, "is there no way to prevent this marriage?"

For a moment he gazed in speechless amazement as she stretched her hands imploringly towards him.

"What—what do you mean?" he exclaimed.

Coming to him she put trembling hands on his breast, her tearful eyes raised to his indignant face.

"Father, he is all that you say. But I shall not live long after this marriage. It will kill me."

"What infernal rubbish is this?" he cried, thrusting her aside. "Have you no sense of gratitude? What kind of girl are you at all!"

"Ah, you can talk like that. But you know as well as I that he is not of our class. Oh, when I think that he will prove after all only a peasant, how shall I bear it—how shall I bear it!"

"Only a—what?"

"A peasant. You know it. It is in his blood. Father, if I am proud, it is you who have made me

so. It is you who told me so often, over and over, since I was a little child, what our people have been, how exclusive. And now you would marry me to a peasant !”

“What—I say, Essie—what is wrong with you to-day ?”

Unclasping the bracelet she flung it on the table, then indignantly faced him.

“It was for your sake. I do not want to be married to this man. The idea is hateful to me. And now, at every hour of the day, I will be chained to a man who can never understand me. I know it will kill me !”

“How will it kill you ?”

“In a hundred ways—every minute. His manner, his accent. He is not a gentleman, though he is educated. Oh, the torture of it ! I cannot bear it !”

“My dear child, your nerves are unstrung——”

“And the cruelty of it to him ! He will soon discover that I loathe and hate him ! It is inhuman !”

“Look here, Essie,” began her father, sternly, “you had better understand once for all—— Now, then,” to a servant who appeared at the door, “what’s the matter ?”

He went to the door, where he stood conversing some moments with the man. Essie, who had sat down, resting her elbows on the dressing-table, covered her face with her hands. Presently, when her father touched her on the shoulder, she did not look up or take her hands from her face.

“Essie,” said he, gravely, “the carriage is ready. I arranged to drive in to the hotel to bring Clarence back here. But—there has been——”

His hesitation was so marked that she looked up quickly, his anxiety becoming reflected in her face.

"There has been——" she faintly repeated.

"An accident or something. I had better go and see. It is only a rumour so far, and there may be nothing in it. Clarence left the supper to go to his grandfather's, and they say he has got hurt or something. No one seems to know anything definite. There may be nothing in it. What is the matter with you?"

She had risen with scared face, grasping the table.

"Went to his grandfather's?" she said, under her breath.

"Really, my dear, you will set my nerves astray if you look like that. Yes; a foolish notion took him—it was the wine, I suppose—to see the old man. Where are you going?"

"To get my cloak," she replied over her shoulder, as she went towards the inner room. "I shall go with you."

Before he could protest she was gone, but quickly reappeared in cloak and hood. She took his arm as they went downstairs in silence. Mike Rafferty, who had been walking up and down in front of the horses, got on the seat; a servant opened the carriage door and they drove away.

The frost films were on the hedgerows. The ice crackled under the wheels. The smoke from Sir Herbert's cigar curled slowly. A turn brought them in sight of the bog, whence the road ran straight to the town. For some time they had heard voices. Once in sight of the bog they saw it alive with people.

"The whole town sames in the bog, sur," remarked Mike, turning his head.

"Surely, surely," said Sir Herbert, standing up to look.

With trembling hands Essie seized her father's arm.

"See, father, who are those in front of us?"

On the road a crowd were following a cart, which was guarded by a strong force of police.

"Drive on, Rafferty," cried Sir Herbert. "Something is wrong here!"

Mike whipped up the horses. As soon as they reached the people—who parted to give passage to the carriage—Sir Herbert, descending, hurried through the crowd. The first person he recognised was Head Constable Kerrigan, who saluted.

"What is wrong, Head Constable?"

"Ah, yir wurship, a terrible bisniss. There has bin a murther. Misther Maguire—— But, mebbe, yill luk. Stan' back, there!"

In company with Kerrigan, Sir Herbert pressed forward. Behind the cart, closely guarded, walked the old white-haired peasant, Peter Maguire, handcuffed. His head was bent. From time to time he glanced at the people with a furtive grin, talking to himself; sometimes silent with glazed eyes and dropped jaw. A policeman who was guiding the horse stopped the cart at a signal from the Head Constable. There was something on the straw covered with sacking.

"Luk here, sur," said Kerrigan.

As he spoke he raised the covering. Sir Herbert, who was close to the wheel, shrank back. He saw the white, stiffened face of Clarence with half-opened eyelids. At the same moment there was a shriek, followed by a burst of excited talking from the people who had hitherto maintained profound silence. Essie, who had followed her father, was at his feet unconscious. Gently they bore her to the carriage, where, as her father took her in his arms, her head fell back on his shoulder.

"Drive home!" he said, hoarsely.

The horses were turned and driven slowly. They had not reached the turn of the road when Essie opened her eyes.

"What has happened, father?"

"Be calm, dear child."

"Father."

"Yes, my darling."

"What is that sound?"

"It is nothing."

"Father, some one is crying."

He put his arms closer about her.

"Father, the people are crying. Is it my marriage morning?"

He bowed his head in silence. Across the frozen bog came the wild keening of the women who followed the melancholy procession as it entered the quiet town.

THE END.

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